MODERN ANTHOLOGIES

General Editor—Dr. Richard Wilson

MODERN BIOGRAPHY

No. 2

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AN ANTHOLOGY OF MODERN BIOGRAPHY

Edited by

Lord David Cecil

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INTRODUCTION

BIOGRAPHY is not an important form of literary art. But it has a special interest to the student of modern literature. For it is the only new form. We talk of modern poetry and modern novels, but these are only new variations on old forms : the poetry and fiction of the past are just as much forms of art as those of to-day. Not so biography. Art is primarily the expression of the artist's creative powers ; he writes to express his personal vision ; he chooses as his subject that which he thinks will best exhibit his particular talent. Now this is not true of the biographer of the past. His aim was not artistic, it was useful ; he wanted to give people information. If he was a man of literary talent, like Boswell, for instance, his book was a work of art. But even if it had not been, it would not have failed. For its primary purpose had been, not to give an artistic impression, but to tell the truth.

A great many biographies are still like this. Mr. John Buchan's *Cromwell*, from which an extract is given in the following pages, is an old-fashioned biography. As Mr. Buchan is a writer of lively pictorial imagination, with an accomplished English style, his story can be read purely for its literary

qualities. But that is not his intention. He writes well, because he cannot write otherwise ; but he is chiefly concerned to give us facts. He does not hesitate to interrupt the flow of his narrative, to discuss the value of his evidence, to give proof and reference. Literature with him comes second to history.

But for the typical modern biographer literature comes first. Mr. Lytton Strachey writes about Queen Victoria, not in order to give us information about her, but because he thinks her life an excellent subject for a work of art. The design of his book shows that its aim is to produce an artistic impression. He does not set out his facts as Mr. Buchan does, complete with reference and proof, he weaves them into a story, grouping them in the order and proportion that will make his picture as vivid and entertaining as possible. Further, he does not write with the impersonality of the pure historian. His whole narrative glows with the colour of his individual vision, sparkles with the light of his individual humour. It is as much an expression of a personality as David Copperfield.

One wonders why it should have been left to our age to write biography in this way. Partly because it is not favourable to the practice of other literary forms : our age is, first of all, scientific. The most important work to-day is done by scientists ; the scientific spirit permeates every study. And this is a bad spirit for the creative artist. It is cool and critical, it checks the enthusiastic emotion, the

exuberant fancy which is the life-blood of poetry, for example. But people are born with a desire to write, as much now as in the past. So that they try to find other forms of expression, and naturally they light on biography. For it is not out of sympathy with the scientific spirit. Though it can be used to convey a personal vision, it is also inevitably concerned to tell the truth. For the study of truth, a scientific spirit is essential. To give a convincing picture of a human being the writer must be as studious of detail, as skilled in investigation, as to give a true diagnosis of a disease. And he must survey his subject with scientific detachment. The biographers of the past tended to write with a strong bias for or against their subject ; or if they were unbiased, their views were yet distorted by strong moral opinions that made them approach him as a judge. But the biographer is there to explain rather than to judge. To get a clear view of a man we do not need to be told if his actions were good—indeed, such comments tend to blur our vision—but how and why he came to do them. Once more the scientist's is the correct attitude. He does not bother to tell us that disease is a bad thing, but what its causes are, and how they show themselves. Moreover, we are better equipped to do this now than in old days. Here we come to the final reason why this is a favourable age for the biographer. The last forty years have seen an enormous advance in the study of psychology ; the nature of human personality and the forces that

actuate it, the influence of heredity and environment, are understood as never before. So that writers are able, as never before, to give a full account of human character.

Still, it is not just the spirit of the age that makes us biographers. Man is led by man ; and we have been led by Mr. Strachey. He is not the very first writer who has turned a true story into a work of art. Historians have done it before : Carlyle, Macaulay, and, in our own time, Mr. Belloc. Again, Sir Edmund Gosse, in *Father and Son*, has written an autobiographical study which is an exquisite piece of literature. All these authors have played their part in creating modern biography. However, we do not see it fully developed till Mr. Strachey. Autobiography is a personal record ; one could read Sir Edmund Gosse's book without realizing that its method could be used to describe people whom the author did not know personally. Historians, on the other hand, are not primarily interested in man as an individual : they are out to show his influence on public events. And therefore, though they may give us incidental vignettes of his private personality, they do not investigate it with the elaborate intimacy of Mr. Strachey. He it was who first saw the full possibilities of this new medium ; he it was who evolved the technical equipment for its expression. We may extend his building, but we must always construct on his foundations. He was the man who established the form.

It is a complex form. From one aspect it is like the novel, dramatic. Its subject is the drama of a human life. Miss Toksvig's *Hans Andersen* shows us the drama of an innocent, romantic idealist in conflict with the humdrum forces that rule the world; Mr. Waugh's *Campion* that of a saint battling for his faith against heretic and persecutor. Again, like the novel, the modern biography is pictorial. Its author attempts to bring his drama before our mental eye, to make us see the faces of the characters, the scenery in which they lived. But—and this is where the biographer's task is more complex than that of the novelist—he is telling us a true story; and he must stick to the truth. His incidents and characters are given to him ready-made: he must present them as accurately as he is able, take care that they appear in the order and significance they had in fact. His creative impulse, therefore, has to express itself in a different way from that of the novelist. The novelist's shows itself mainly in invention, in his power to create scenes and characters; the biographer's shows itself in interpretation, in his capacity to discover the significance of a given story, to discern amid the heterogeneous mass of letters, diaries, memoirs, which are his raw material, that continuous theme which will compose them into a work of art. Like the maker of pictures in mosaic, his art is one of arrangement; he cannot alter the shape of his material, his task is to invent a design into which his hard little stones of fact can

be fitted as they are. Further, his imagination appears in his ability to vitalize his material, to clothe the dry bones of truth in the breathing flesh and blood which make them living to the reader.

Biography, then, must stick to truth ; but this does not entail a lack of variety. You could have two lives of the same person unlike each other, and both good. For facts assume a different complexion in different lights. The same story may be comic, pathetic, or simply curious, according as it is seen by the eye of the satirist, the sentimentalist, or the scientific investigator. Mr. Lytton Strachey was a satirist ; he looked at his subjects in an ironical mood, keen to notice their comic implications. He did this so brilliantly that most of his successors have adopted a similar attitude. Monsieur Maurois, Mr. Guedalla, Miss Olivier, are predominatingly satiric, though the satire of each is modified by his individual point of view. Monsieur Maurois is more light-hearted than Mr. Strachey, Miss Olivier more genial. But not all modern biographers are satirical. Miss Toksvig's enchanting *Hans Andersen* is full of humour, but it is a sympathetic humour, blended rainbow-fashion with pathos and poetry. Hers is a lyrical biography. Mr. Evelyn Waugh's *Campion* is an essay in the heroic : severe and eloquent, it sets out to rouse our admiration for his hero's courage and piety. Mr. Quennell and Mr. Geoffrey Scott write in the serious spirit of the psychological novelist intent to unveil the likeness of the inner man. Finally,

Mrs. Carswell and Mr. Bryant approach their subject in no single mood ; their aim is to bring a man and his age living before us, lit and shadowed by the changing comedy and tragedy of ordinary life as we know it.

Again, Mr. Strachey, in his *Queen Victoria*, concentrates on the Queen herself ; he only sketches in enough of the historical background as is necessary to make us understand her private character. Mr. Guedalla, on the other hand, places his sitter against an elaborately finished historical panorama. He sees his subject as a period pageant, Mr. Strachey as an intimate comedy. Meanwhile, Mr. Belloc, the most powerful writer of our day who has written biography, has evolved a method of his own, uninfluenced by Mr. Strachey. As I have said, it is not pure biography. Like the older historians, he is interested in his subject as a public, rather than a private character. He presents Danton in relation to the forces dominating the French Revolution ; he makes him live by showing us how he expresses his time, and modifies its events. For a character like Danton, this is the right attitude. His whole life was absorbed in political affairs ; to describe it exclusively in those private aspects in which one would describe Shelley's or Cowper's, would be to lose its significance. Thus, in addition to choosing the point of view from which best to express his personal vision, the biographer must choose that which exhibits his subject in the truest proportion.

Indeed, he walks along a knife-edge. For he is under an equal obligation to art and to life, his book must be equally satisfying as picture and as likeness. It cannot be said that modern biographers have always kept this balance. Some have sacrificed art to life. They give us a great many facts, and present them pleasantly, but they have not composed them into an artistic unity. Their books are not pictures, but scrap books. More often they err on the other side, and sacrifice life to art. Their portrait is vivid, but it is not accurate. They omit essential facts; or they twist them from their true significance, in order to make them more effective; or they fill up gaps in their information with unfounded conjectures of their own. Even those accomplished authors, from whom it is my privilege to quote in the ensuing pages, have fallen sometimes into one or other of these errors. It is natural enough, the balance is so delicate. But it can be kept. Taken as a story or as a bit of history, Queen Victoria is equally admirable. If our age has done nothing else, it has bequeathed to posterity a model biography.

I

LYTTON STRACHEY

THE YOUNG QUEEN AND HER PRIME MINISTER

[When Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1834 the Whig party, under the leadership of Lord Melbourne, was in power. It was to him fell the duty of instructing her in the duties of her station. The relationship that grew up in consequence between them is the subject of this brilliant passage. Among the other persons mentioned in the narrative are Lady Caroline Lamb, Melbourne's wife, the mistress of Byron, who had died in 1828; Baron Stockmar, a German doctor sent by the Queen's uncle, King Leopold of Belgium, to act as an unofficial counsellor to her; Baroness Lehzen, the Queen's governess; Thomas Creevey, the diarist and Whig politician. Lord Durham, the Whig statesman who was sent out to repress the Canadian insurrection in 1837, subsequently drew up the report which was to form the basis of the Canadian Constitution.]

WILLIAM LAMB, Viscount Melbourne, was fifty-eight years of age, and had been for the last three

years Prime Minister of England. In every outward respect he was one of the most fortunate of mankind. He had been born into the midst of riches, brilliance, and power. His mother, fascinating and intelligent, had been a great Whig hostess, and he had been bred up as a member of that radiant society which, during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, concentrated within itself the ultimate perfections of a hundred years of triumphant aristocracy. Nature had given him beauty and brains; the unexpected death of an elder brother brought him wealth, a peerage, and the possibility of high advancement. Within that charmed circle, whatever one's personal disabilities, it was difficult to fail; and to him, with all his advantages, success was well-nigh unavoidable. With little effort, he attained political eminence. On the triumph of the Whigs he became one of the leading members of the Government; and when Lord Grey retired from the premiership he quietly stepped into the vacant place. Nor was it only in the visible signs of fortune that Fate had been kind to him. Bound to succeed, and to succeed easily, he was gifted with so fine a nature that his success became him. His mind, at once supple and copious, his temperament, at once calm and sensitive, enabled him not merely to work but to live with perfect facility and with the grace of strength. In society he was a notable talker, a captivating companion, a charming man. If one looked deeper, one saw at once that he was not ordinary, that the piquancies of his conversa-

tion and his manner—his free-and-easy vaguenesses, his abrupt questions, his lollings and loungings, his innumerable oaths—were something more than an amusing ornament, were the outward manifestation of an individuality peculiar to the core.

The precise nature of this individuality was very difficult to gauge: it was dubious, complex, perhaps self-contradictory. Certainly there was an ironical discordance between the inner history of the man and his apparent fortunes. He owed all he had to his birth, and his birth was shameful; it was known well enough that his mother had passionately loved Lord Egremont, and that Lord Melbourne was not his father. His marriage, which had seemed to be the crown of his youthful ardours, was a long, miserable, desperate failure: the incredible Lady Caroline,

> . . . "with pleasures too refined to please,
> With too much spirit to be e'er at ease,
> With too much quickness to be ever taught,
> With too much thinking to have common thought,"

was very nearly the destruction of his life. When at last he emerged from the anguish and confusion of her folly, her extravagance, her rage, her despair, and her devotion, he was left alone with endless memories of intermingled farce and tragedy, and an only son who was an imbecile. But there was something else that he owed to Lady Caroline.

While she whirled with Byron in a hectic frenzy of love and fashion, he had stayed at home in an indulgence bordering on cynicism, and occupied his solitude with reading. It was thus that he had acquired those habits of study, that love of learning, and that wide and accurate knowledge of ancient and modern literature, which formed so unexpected a part of his mental equipment. His passion for reading never deserted him ; even when he was Prime Minister he found time to master every new important book. With an incongruousness that was characteristic, his favourite study was theology. An accomplished classical scholar, he was deeply read in the Fathers of the Church ; heavy volumes of commentary and exegesis he examined with scrupulous diligence ; and at any odd moment he might be found turning over the pages of the Bible. To the ladies whom he most liked he would lend some learned work on the Revelation, crammed with marginal notes in his own hand, or Dr. Lardner's " Observations upon the Jewish Errors with respect to the Conversion of Mary Magdalene." The more pious among them had high hopes that these studies would lead him into the right way ; but of this there were no symptoms in his after-dinner conversation.

The paradox of his political career was no less curious. By temperament an aristocrat, by conviction a conservative, he came to power as the leader of the popular party, the party of change. He had profoundly disliked the Reform Bill, which

he had only accepted at last as a necessary evil ; and the Reform Bill lay at the root of the very existence, of the very meaning, of his government. He was far too sceptical to believe in progress of any kind. Things were best as they were—or rather, they were least bad. " You'd better try to do no good," was one of his dictums, " and then you'll get into no scrapes." Education at best was futile ; education of the poor was positively dangerous. The factory children ? " Oh, if you'd only have the goodness to leave them alone ! " Free Trade was a delusion ; the ballot was nonsense ; and there was no such thing as a democracy. Nevertheless, he was not a reactionary ; he was simply an opportunist. The whole duty of government, he said, was " to prevent crime and to preserve contracts." All one could really hope to do was to carry on. He himself carried on in a remarkable manner—with perpetual compromises, with fluctuations and contradictions, with every kind of weakness, and yet with shrewdness, with gentleness, even with conscientiousness, and a light and airy mastery of men and of events. He conducted the transactions of business with extraordinary nonchalance. Important persons, ushered up for some grave interview, found him in a towselled bed, littered with books and papers, or vaguely shaving in a dressing-room ; but, when they went downstairs again, they would realize that somehow or other they had been pumped. When he had to receive a deputation, he could hardly ever do so with be-

coming gravity. The worthy delegates of the tallow-chandlers, or the Society for the Abolition of Capital Punishment, were distressed and mortified when, in the midst of their speeches, the Prime Minister became absorbed in blowing a feather, or suddenly cracked an unseemly joke. How could they have guessed that he had spent the night before diligently getting up the details of their case? He hated patronage and the making of appointments—a feeling rare in Ministers. "As for the Bishops," he burst out, "I positively believe they die to vex me." But when at last the appointment was made, it was made with keen discrimination. His colleagues observed another symptom—was it of his irresponsibility or his wisdom? He went to sleep in the Cabinet.

Probably, if he had been born a little earlier, he would have been a simpler and a happier man. As it was, he was a child of the eighteenth century whose lot was cast in a new, difficult, unsympathetic age. He was an autumn rose. With all his gracious amenity, his humour, his happy-go-lucky ways, a deep disquietude possessed him. A sentimental cynic, a sceptical believer, he was restless and melancholy at heart. Above all, he could never harden himself; those sensitive petals shivered in every wind. Whatever else he might be, one thing was certain: Lord Melbourne was always human, supremely human—too human, perhaps.

And now, with old age upon him, his life took a sudden, new, extraordinary turn. He became, in

the twinkling of an eye, the intimate adviser and the daily companion of a young girl who had stepped all at once from a nursery to a throne. His relations with women had been, like everything else about him, ambiguous. Nobody had ever been able quite to gauge the shifting, emotional complexities of his married life; Lady Caroline vanished; but his peculiar susceptibilities remained. Female society of some kind or other was necessary to him, and he did not stint himself; a great part of every day was invariably spent in it. The feminine element in him made it easy, made it natural and inevitable for him to be the friend of a great many women; but the masculine element in him was strong as well. In such circumstances it is also easy, it is even natural, perhaps it is even inevitable, to be something more than a friend. There were rumours and combustions. Lord Melbourne was twice a co-respondent in a divorce action; but on each occasion he won his suit. The lovely Lady Brandon, the unhappy and brilliant Mrs. Norton . . . the law exonerated them both. Beyond that hung an impenetrable veil. But at any rate it was clear that, with such a record, the Prime Minister's position in Buckingham Palace must be a highly delicate one. However, he was used to delicacies, and he met the situation with consummate success. His behaviour was from the first moment impeccable. His manner towards the young Queen mingled, with perfect facility, the watchfulness and the respect of a statesman and

a courier with the tender solicitude of a parent. He was at once reverential and affectionate, at once the servant and the guide. At the same time the habits of his life underwent a surprising change. His comfortable, unpunctual days became subject to the unaltering routine of a palace; no longer did he sprawl on sofas; not a single "damn" escaped his lips. The man of the world who had been the friend of Byron and the Regent, the talker whose paradoxes had held Holland House enthralled, the cynic whose ribaldries had enlivened so many deep potations, the lover whose soft words had captivated such beauty and such passion and such wit, might now be seen, evening after evening, talking with infinite politeness to a schoolgirl, bolt upright, amid the silence and the rigidity of Court etiquette.

On her side, Victoria was instantaneously fascinated by Lord Melbourne. The good report of Stockmar had no doubt prepared the way; Lehzen was wisely propitiated; and the first highly favourable impression was never afterwards belied. She found him perfect; and perfect in her sight he remained. Her absolute and unconcealed adoration was very natural; what innocent young creature could have resisted, in any circumstances, the charm and the devotion of such a man? But, in her situation, there was a special influence which gave a peculiar glow to all she felt. After years of emptiness and dullness and suppression, she had

come suddenly, in the heyday of youth, into freedom and power. She was mistress of herself, of great domains and palaces; she was Queen of England. Responsibilities and difficulties she might have, no doubt, and in heavy measure; but one feeling dominated and absorbed all others—the feeling of joy. Everything pleased her. She was in high spirits from morning till night. Mr. Creevey, grown old now, and very near his end, catching a glimpse of her at Brighton, was much amused, in his sharp fashion, by the ingenuous gaiety of "little Vic."—"A more homely little being you never beheld, *when she is at her ease*, and she is evidently dying to be always more so. She laughs in real earnest, opening her mouth as wide as it can go, showing not very pretty gums. . . . She eats quite as heartily as she laughs, I think I may say she gobbles. . . . She blushes and laughs every instant in so natural a way as to disarm anybody." But it was not merely when she was laughing or gobbling that she enjoyed herself; the performance of her official duties gave her intense satisfaction. "I really have immensely to do," she wrote in her journal a few days after her accession; "I receive so many communications from my Ministers, but I like it very much." And again, a week later, "I repeat what I said before that I have *so many* communications from the Ministers, and from me to them, and I get so many papers to sign every day, that I have always a *very great* deal to do. I *delight* in this work." Through the girl's immaturity

the vigorous predestined tastes of the woman were pushing themselves into existence with eager velocity, with delicious force.

One detail of her happy situation deserves particular mention. Apart from the splendour of her social position and the momentousness of her political one, she was a person of great wealth. As soon as Parliament met, an annuity of £385,000 was settled upon her. When the expenses of her household had been discharged, she was left with £68,000 a year of her own. She enjoyed besides the revenues of the Duchy of Lancaster, which amounted annually to over £27,000. The first use to which she put her money was characteristic: she paid off her father's debts. In money matters, no less than in other matters, she was determined to be correct. She had the instincts of a man of business; and she never could have borne to be in a position that was financially unsound.

With youth and happiness gilding every hour, the days passed merrily enough. And each day hinged upon Lord Melbourne. Her diary shows us, with undiminished clarity, the life of the young sovereign during the early months of her reign—a life satisfactorily regular, full of delightful business, a life of simple pleasures, mostly physical—riding, eating, dancing—a quick, easy, highly unsophisticated life, sufficient unto itself. The light of the morning is upon it; and, in the rosy radiance, the figure of "Lord M." emerges, glorified and supreme. If she is the heroine of the story, he is the

hero ; but indeed they are more than hero and heroine, for there are no other characters at all. Lehzen, the Baron, Uncle Leopold, are unsubstantial shadows—the incidental supers of the piece. Her paradise was peopled by two persons, and surely that was enough. One sees them together still, a curious couple, strangely united in those artless pages, under the magical illumination of that dawn of eighty years ago : the polished high fine gentleman with the whitening hair and whiskers and the thick dark eyebrows and the mobile lips and the big expressive eyes ; and beside him the tiny Queen—fair, slim, elegant, active, in her plain girl's dress and little tippet, looking up at him earnestly, adoringly, with eyes blue and projecting, and half-open mouth. So they appear upon every page of the Journal ; upon every page Lord M. is present, Lord M. is speaking, Lord M. is being amusing, instructive, delightful, and affectionate at once, while Victoria drinks in the honeyed words, laughs till she shows her gums, tries hard to remember, and runs off, as soon as she is left alone, to put it all down. Their long conversations touched upon a multitude of topics. Lord M. would criticize books, throw out a remark or two on the British Constitution, make some passing reflections on human life, and tell story after story of the great people of the eighteenth century. Then there would be business—a dispatch perhaps from Lord Durham in Canada, which Lord M. would read. But first he must explain a little.

" He said that I must know that Canada originally belonged to the French, and was only ceded to the English in 1760, when it was taken in an expedition under Wolfe ; ' a very daring enterprise,' he said. Canada was then entirely French, and the British only came afterwards. . . . Lord M. explained this very clearly (and much better than I have done) and said a good deal more about it. He then read me Durham's dispatch, which is a very long one and took him more than ½ an hour to read. Lord M. read it beautifully with that fine soft voice of his, and with so much expression, so that it is needless to say I was much interested by it." And then the talk would take a more personal turn. Lord M. would describe his boyhood, and she would learn that " he wore his hair long, as all boys then did, till he was 17 ; (*how* handsome he must have looked !)." Or she would find out about his queer tastes and habits—how he never carried a watch, which seemed quite extraordinary. " ' I always ask the servant what o'clock it is, and then he tells me what he likes,' said Lord M." Or, as the rooks wheeled about round the trees, " in a manner which indicated rain," he would say that he could sit looking at them for an hour, and " was quite surprised at my disliking them. . . . Lord M. said, ' The rooks are my delight.' "

The day's routine, whether in London or at Windsor, was almost invariable. The morning was devoted to business and Lord M. In the afternoon the whole Court went out riding. The

Queen, in her velvet riding-habit and a top-hat with a veil draped about the brim, headed the cavalcade ; and Lord M. rode beside her. The lively troupe went fast and far, to the extreme exhilaration of Her Majesty. Back in the Palace again, there was still time for a little more fun before dinner—a game of battledore and shuttlecock perhaps, or a romp along the galleries with some children. Dinner came, and the ceremonial decidedly tightened. The gentleman of highest rank sat on the right hand of the Queen ; on her left—it soon became an established rule—sat Lord Melbourne. After the ladies had left the dining-room, the gentlemen were not permitted to remain behind for very long ; indeed, the short time allowed them for their wine-drinking formed the subject—so it was rumoured—of one of the very few disputes between the Queen and her Prime Minister [1] ; but her determination carried the day, and from that moment after-dinner drunkenness began to go out of fashion. When the company was reassembled in the drawing-room the etiquette was stiff. For a few minutes the Queen spoke in turn to each one of her guests ; and during these

[1] The Duke of Bedford told Greville he was " sure there was a battle between her and Melbourne. . . . He is sure there was one about the men's sitting after dinner, for he heard her say to him rather angrily, ' it is a horrid custom '—but when the ladies left the room (he dined there) directions were given that the men should remain *five minutes* longer." Greville, Feb. 26, 1840 (unpublished).

short uneasy colloquies the aridity of royalty was apt to become painfully evident. One night Mr. Greville, the Clerk of the Privy Council, was present; his turn soon came; the middle-aged, hard-faced *viveur* was addressed by his young hostess. "Have you been riding to-day, Mr. Greville?" asked the Queen. "No, Madam, I have not," replied Mr. Greville. "It was a fine day," continued the Queen. "Yes, Madam, a very fine day," said Mr. Greville. "It was rather cold, though," said the Queen. "It *was* rather cold, Madam," said Mr. Greville. "Your sister, Lady Francis Egerton, rides, I think, doesn't she?" said the Queen. "She does ride sometimes, Madam," said Mr. Greville. There was a pause, after which Mr. Greville ventured to take the lead, though he did not venture to change the subject. "Has your Majesty been riding to-day?" asked Mr. Greville. "Oh yes, a very long ride," answered the Queen with animation. "Has your Majesty got a nice horse?" said Mr. Greville. "Oh, a very nice horse," said the Queen. It was over. Her Majesty gave a smile and an inclination of the head, Mr. Greville a profound bow, and the next conversation began with the next gentleman. When all the guests had been disposed of, the Duchess of Kent sat down to her whist, while everybody else was ranged about the round table. Lord Melbourne sat beside the Queen, and talked pertinaciously—very often a propos to the contents of one of the large albums of engravings with

which the round table was covered—until it was half-past eleven and time to go to bed.

Occasionally there were little diversions: the evening might be spent at the opera or at the play. Next morning the royal critic was careful to note down her impressions. "It was Shakespeare's tragedy of *Hamlet*, and we came in at the beginning of it. Mr. Charles Kean (son of old Kean) acted the part of Hamlet, and I must say beautifully. His conception of this very difficult, and I may almost say incomprehensible, character is admirable; his delivery of all the fine long speeches quite beautiful; he is excessively graceful and all his actions and attitudes are good, though not at all good-looking in face. . . . I came away just as *Hamlet* was over." Later on, she went to see Macready in *King Lear*. The story was new to her; she knew nothing about it, and at first she took very little interest in what was passing on the stage; she preferred to chatter and laugh with the Lord Chamberlain. But, as the play went on, her mood changed; her attention was fixed, and then she laughed no more. Yet she was puzzled; it seemed a strange, a horrible business. What did Lord M. think? Lord M. thought it was a very fine play, but to be sure, "a rough, coarse play, written for those times, with exaggerated characters." "I'm glad you've seen it," he added. But, undoubtedly, the evenings which she enjoyed most were those on which there was dancing. She was always ready enough to seize any excuse—the

arrival of cousins—a birthday—a gathering of young people—to give the command for that. Then, when the band played, and the figures of the dancers swayed to the music, and she felt her own figure swaying too, with youthful spirits so close on every side—then her happiness reached its height, her eyes sparkled, she must go on and on into the small hours of the morning. For a moment Lord M. himself was forgotten.

Queen Victoria. 1921.

II

LYTTON STRACHEY

GORDON STARTS ON HIS LAST ADVENTURE

[In 1884 General Gordon was appointed by the Liberal Government to evacuate the Sudan. The circumstances are outlined in the following passage. At this period Mr. Gladstone was Prime Minister, and Lord Hartington a member of his Cabinet. Gordon had spent his life in a career of picturesque knight-errantry in China, the Sudan, and other distant parts of the globe, diversified by the exercises of a fanatical and fatalistic religion.]

GORDON's last great adventure, like his first, was occasioned by a religious revolt. At the very moment when, apparently for ever, he was shaking the dust of Egypt from his feet, Mahommed Ahmed was starting upon his extraordinary career in the Sudan. The time was propitious for revolutions. The effete Egyptian Empire was hovering upon the verge of collapse. The enormous territories of the Sudan were seething with discontent. Gordon's administration had, by its very vigour,

only helped to precipitate the inevitable disaster. His attacks upon the slave-trade, his establishment of a government monopoly in ivory, his hostility to the Egyptian officials, had been so many shocks, shaking to its foundations the whole rickety machine. The result of all his efforts had been, on the one hand, to fill the most powerful classes in the community—the dealers in slaves and ivory—with a hatred of the government, and, on the other, to awaken among the mass of the inhabitants a new perception of the dishonesty and incompetence of their Egyptian masters. When, after Gordon's removal, the rule of the Pashas once more asserted itself over the Sudan, a general combustion became inevitable: the first spark would set off the blaze. Just then it happened that Mahommed Ahmed, the son of an insignificant priest in Dongola, having quarrelled with the Sheikh from whom he was receiving religious instruction, set up as an independent preacher, with his headquarters at Abba Island, on the Nile, a hundred and fifty miles above Khartoum. Like Hong-siu-tsuen, he began as a religious reformer, and ended as a rebel king. It was his mission, he declared, to purge the true Faith of its worldliness and corruptions, to lead the followers of the Prophet into the paths of chastity, simplicity, and holiness; with the puritanical zeal of a Calvin, he denounced junketings and merrymakings, songs and dances, lewd living and all the delights of the flesh. He fell into trances, he saw visions, he saw the Prophet and Jesus, and the Angel Izrail accom-

panying him and watching over him for ever. He prophesied, and performed miracles, and his fame spread through the land.

There is an ancient tradition in the Mahommedan world, telling of a mysterious being, the last in succession of the twelve holy Imams, who, untouched by death and withdrawn into the recesses of a mountain, was destined, at the appointed hour, to come forth again among men. His title was the Mahdi, the guide ; some believed that he would be the forerunner of the Messiah ; others that he would be Christ Himself. Already various Mahdis had made their appearance ; several had been highly successful, and two, in mediæval times, had founded dynasties in Egypt. But who could tell whether all these were not impostors ? Might not the twelfth Imam be still waiting, in mystical concealment, ready to emerge, at any moment, at the bidding of God ? There were signs by which the true Mahdi might be recognized—unmistakable signs, if one could but read them aright. He must be of the family of the prophet ; he must possess miraculous powers of no common kind ; and his person must be overflowing with a peculiar sanctity. The pious dwellers beside those distant waters, where holy men by dint of a constant repetition of one of the ninety-nine names of God, secured the protection of guardian angels, and where groups of devotees, shaking their heads with a violence which would unseat the reason of less athletic worshippers, attained to an extraordinary beatitude,

heard with awe of the young preacher whose saintliness was almost more than mortal and whose miracles brought amazement to the mind. Was he not also of the family of the prophet? He himself had said so; and who would disbelieve the holy man? When he appeared in person, every doubt was swept away. There was a strange splendour in his presence, an overpowering passion in the torrent of his speech. Great was the wickedness of the people, and great was their punishment! Surely their miseries were a visible sign of the wrath of the Lord. They had sinned, and the cruel tax-gatherers had come among them, and the corrupt governors, and all the oppressions of the Egyptians. Yet these things, too, should have an end. The Lord would raise up His chosen deliverer: the hearts of the people would be purified, and their enemies would be laid low. The accursed Egyptian would be driven from the land. Let the faithful take heart and make ready. How soon might not the long-predestined hour strike, when the twelfth Imam, the guide, the Mahdi, would reveal himself to the World? In that hour the righteous would triumph and the guilty be laid low for ever. Such was the teaching of Mahommed Ahmed. A band of enthusiastic disciples gathered round him, eagerly waiting for the revelation which would crown their hopes. At last the moment came. One evening, at Abba Island, taking aside the foremost of his followers, the Master whispered the portentous news. He was the Mahdi.

The Egyptian Governor-General at Khartoum, hearing that a religious movement was on foot, grew disquieted, and dispatched an emissary to Abba Island to summon the impostor to his presence. The emissary was courteously received. Mahommed Ahmed, he said, must come at once to Khartoum. "Must!" exclaimed the Mahdi, starting to his feet, with a strange look in his eyes. The look was so strange that the emissary thought it advisable to cut short the interview and to return to Khartoum empty-handed. Thereupon the Governor-General sent two hundred soldiers to seize the audacious rebel by force. With his handful of friends, the Mahdi fell upon the soldiers and cut them to pieces. The news spread like wild-fire through the country: the Mahdi had arisen, the Egyptians were destroyed. But it was clear to the little band of enthusiasts at Abba Island that their position on the river was no longer tenable. The Mahdi, deciding upon a second Hegira, retreated south-westward, into the depths of Kordofan.

The retreat was a triumphal progress. The country, groaning under alien misgovernment and vibrating with religious excitement, suddenly found in this rebellious prophet a rallying point, a hero, a deliverer. And now another element was added to the forces of insurrection. The Baggara tribes of Kordofan, cattle-owners and slave-traders, the most warlike and vigorous of the inhabitants of the Sudan, threw in their lot with the Mahdi. Their powerful emirs, still smarting from the blows of

Gordon, saw that the opportunity for revenge had come. A holy war was proclaimed against the Egyptian misbelievers. The followers of the Mahdi, dressed, in token of a new austerity of living, in the "jibbeh," or white smock of coarse cloth, patched with variously shaped and coloured patches, were rapidly organized into a formidable army. Several attacks from Khartoum were repulsed; and at last the Mahdi felt strong enough to advance against the enemy. While his lieutenants led detachments into the vast provinces lying to the west and the south—Darfour and Bahr-el-Ghazal—he himself marched upon El Obeid, the capital of Kordofan. It was in vain that reinforcements were hurried from Khartoum to the assistance of the garrison: there was some severe fighting; the town was completely cut off; and after a six months' siege, it surrendered. A great quantity of guns and ammunition and £100,000 in specie fell into the hands of the Mahdi. He was master of Kordofan; he was at the head of a great army; he was rich; he was worshipped. A dazzling future opened before him. No possibility seemed too remote, no fortune too magnificent. A vision of universal empire hovered before his eyes. Allah, whose servant he was, who had led him thus far, would lead him onward still, to the glorious end.

For some months he remained at El Obeid, consolidating his dominion. In a series of circular letters he described his colloquies with the Almighty

and laid down the rule of living which his followers were to pursue. The faithful, under pain of severe punishment, were to return to the ascetic simplicity of ancient times. A criminal code was drawn up, meting out executions, mutilations, and floggings with a barbaric zeal. The blasphemer was to be instantly hanged, the adulterer was to be scourged with whips of rhinoceros hide, the thief was to have his right hand and his left foot hacked off in the market-place. No more were marriages to be celebrated with pomp and feasting, no more was the youthful warrior to swagger with flowing hair : henceforth the believer must banquet on dates and milk, and his head must be kept shaved. Minor transgressions were punished by confiscation of property, or by imprisonment and chains. But the rhinoceros whip was the favourite instrument of chastisement. Men were flogged for drinking a glass of wine, they were flogged for smoking ; if they swore, they received eighty lashes for every expletive ; and after eighty lashes it was a common thing to die. Before long, flogging grew to be so everyday an incident that the young men made a game of it, as a test of their endurance of pain. With this Spartan ferocity there was mingled the glamour and the mystery of the East. The Mahdi himself, his four Khalifas, and the principal emirs, masters of sudden riches, surrounded themselves with slaves and women, with trains of horses and asses, with bodyguards and glittering arms. There were rumours of debaucheries in high places ; of

the Mahdi, forgetful of his own ordinances, revelling in the recesses of his harem, and quaffing date syrup mixed with ginger out of the silver cups looted from the church of the Christians. But that imposing figure had only to show itself for the tongue of scandal to be stilled. The tall, broad-shouldered, majestic man, with the dark face and black beard and great eyes—who could doubt that he was the embodiment of a superhuman power? Fascination dwelt in every movement, every glance. The eyes, painted with antimony, flashed extraordinary fires; the exquisite smile revealed, beneath the vigorous lips, white upper teeth with a V-shaped space between them—the certain sign of fortune. His turban was folded with faultless art, his jibbeh, speckless, was perfumed with sandalwood, musk, and attar of roses. He was at once all courtesy and all command. Thousands followed him, thousands prostrated themselves before him; thousands, when he lifted up his voice in solemn worship, knew that the heavens were opened and that they had come near to God. Then all at once the onbeia—the elephant's tusk trumpet—would give out its enormous sound. The nahas—the brazen war-drums—would summon, with their weird rolling, the whole host to arms. The green flag and the red flag and the black flag would rise over the multitude. The great army would move forward, coloured, glistening, dark, violent, proud, beautiful. The drunkenness, the madness, of religion would blaze on every face; and the Mahdi, immovable

on his charger, would let the scene grow under his eyes in silence.

El Obeid fell in January 1883. Meanwhile events of the deepest importance had occurred in Egypt. The rise of Arábi had synchronized with that of the Mahdi. Both movements were nationalist; both were directed against alien rulers who had shown themselves unfit to rule. While the Sudanese were shaking off the yoke of Egypt, the Egyptians themselves grew impatient of their own masters—the Turkish and Circassian Pashas who filled with their incompetence all the high offices of state. The army, led by Ahmed Arábi, a Colonel of fellah origin, mutinied, the Khedive gave way, and it seemed as if a new order were about to be established. A new order was indeed upon the point of appearing: but it was of a kind undreamt of in Arábi's philosophy. At the critical moment the English Government intervened. An English fleet bombarded Alexandria, an English army landed under Lord Wolseley and defeated Arábi and his supporters at Tel-el-kebir. The rule of the Pashas was nominally restored; but henceforth, in effect, the English were masters of Egypt.

Nevertheless, the English themselves were slow to recognize this fact. Their government had intervened unwillingly; the occupation of the country was a merely temporary measure; their army was to be withdrawn as soon as a tolerable administration had been set up. But a tolerable administration, presided over by the Pashas, seemed

long in coming, and the English army remained. In the meantime the Mahdi had entered El Obeid, and his dominion was rapidly spreading over the greater part of the Sudan.

Then a terrible catastrophe took place. The Pashas, happy once more in Cairo, pulling the old strings and growing fat over the old flesh-pots, decided to give the world an unmistakable proof of their renewed vigour. They would tolerate the insurrection in the Sudan no longer; they would destroy the Mahdi, reduce his followers to submission, and re-establish their own beneficent rule over the whole country. To this end they collected together an army of ten thousand men, and placed it under the command of Colonel Hicks, a retired English officer. He was ordered to advance and suppress the rebellion. In these proceedings the English Government refused to take any part. Unable, or unwilling, to realize that, so long as there was an English army in Egypt, they could not avoid the responsibilities of supreme power, they declared that the domestic policy of the Egyptian administration was no concern of theirs. It was a fatal error—an error which they themselves, before many weeks were over, were to be forced by the hard logic of events to admit. The Pashas, left to their own devices, mismanaged the Hicks expedition to their hearts' content. The miserable troops, swept together from the relics of Arábi's disbanded army, were dispatched to Khartoum in chains. After a month's drilling

they were pronounced to be fit to attack the fanatics of the Sudan. Colonel Hicks was a brave man; urged on by the authorities in Cairo, he shut his eyes to the danger ahead of him, and marched out from Khartoum in the direction of El Obeid at the beginning of September 1883. Abandoning his communications, he was soon deep in the desolate wastes of Kordofan. As he advanced, his difficulties increased; the guides were treacherous, the troops grew exhausted, the supply of water gave out. He pressed on, and at last, on November 5th, not far from El Obeid, the harassed, fainting, almost desperate army plunged into a vast forest of gum-trees and mimosa scrub. There was a sudden, an appalling yell; the Mahdi, with forty thousand of his finest men, sprang from their ambush. The Egyptians were surrounded, and immediately overpowered. It was not a defeat, but an annihilation. Hicks and his European staff were slaughtered; the whole army was slaughtered; three hundred wounded wretches crept away into the forest alive.

The consequences of this event were felt in every part of the Sudan. To the westward, in Darfour, the Governor, Slatin Pasha, after a prolonged and valiant resistance, was forced to surrender, and the whole province fell into the hands of the rebels. Southwards, in the Bahr-el-Ghazal, Lupton Bey was shut up in a remote stronghold, while the country was overrun. The Mahdi's triumphs were beginning to penetrate even into the tropical regions

of Equatoria ; the tribes were rising, and Emin Pasha was preparing to retreat towards the Great Lakes. On the East, Osman Digna pushed the insurrection right up to the shores of the Red Sea, and laid siege to Suakin. Before the year was over, with the exception of a few isolated and surrounded garrisons, the Mahdi was absolute lord of a territory equal to the combined area of Spain, France, and Germany ; and his victorious armies were rapidly closing round Khartoum.

When the news of the Hicks disaster reached Cairo, the Pashas calmly announced that they would collect another army of ten thousand men, and again attack the Mahdi ; but the English Government understood at last the gravity of the case. They saw that a crisis was upon them, and that they could no longer escape the implications of their position in Egypt. What were they to do ? Were they to allow the Egyptians to become more and more deeply involved in a ruinous, perhaps ultimately a fatal, war with the Mahdi ? And, if not, what steps were they to take ? A small minority of the party then in power in England—the Liberal Party—were anxious to withdraw from Egypt altogether and at once. On the other hand, another and more influential minority, with representatives in the Cabinet, were in favour of a more active intervention in Egyptian affairs—of the deliberate use of the power of England to give to Egypt internal stability and external security ; they were ready, if necessary, to take the field against

the Mahdi with English troops. But the great bulk of the party, and the Cabinet, with Mr. Gladstone at their head, preferred a middle course. Realizing the impracticability of an immediate withdrawal, they were nevertheless determined to remain in Egypt not a moment longer than was necessary, and, in the meantime, to interfere as little as possible in Egyptian affairs. From a campaign in the Sudan conducted by an English army they were altogether averse. If, therefore, the English army was not to be used, and the Egyptian army was not fit to be used, against the Mahdi, it followed that any attempt to reconquer the Sudan must be abandoned; the remaining Egyptian troops must be withdrawn, and in future military operations must be limited to those of a strictly defensive kind. Such was the decision of the English Government. Their determination was strengthened by two considerations: in the first place, they saw that the Mahdi's rebellion was largely a nationalist movement, directed against an alien power, and, in the second place, the policy of withdrawal from the Sudan was the policy of their own representative in Egypt, Sir Evelyn Baring, who had lately been appointed Consul-General at Cairo. There was only one serious obstacle in the way—the attitude of the Pashas at the head of the Egyptian Government. The infatuated old men were convinced that they would have better luck next time, that another army and another Hicks would certainly destroy the Mahdi, and that, even if the

Mahdi were again victorious, yet another army and yet another Hicks would no doubt be forthcoming, and that *they* would do the trick, or, failing that . . . but they refused to consider eventualities any further. In the face of such opposition, the English Government, unwilling as they were to interfere, saw that there was no choice open to them but to exercise pressure. They therefore instructed Sir Evelyn Baring, in the event of the Egyptian Government refusing to withdraw from the Sudan, to insist upon the Khedive's appointing other Ministers who would be willing to do so.

Meanwhile, not only the Government, but the public in England were beginning to realize the alarming nature of the Egyptian situation. It was some time before the details of the Hicks expedition were fully known, but when they were, and when the appalling character of the disaster was understood, a thrill of horror ran through the country. The newspapers became full of articles on the Sudan, of personal descriptions of the Mahdi, of agitated letters from Colonels and clergymen demanding vengeance, and of serious discussions of future policy in Egypt. Then, at the beginning of the new year, alarming messages began to arrive from Khartoum. Colonel Coetlogon, who was in command of the Egyptian troops, reported a menacing concentration of the enemy. Day by day, hour by hour, affairs grew worse. The Egyptians were obviously outnumbered: they could not maintain themselves in the field; Khartoum was in

danger ; at any moment its investment might be complete. And, with Khartoum once cut off from communication with Egypt, what might not happen ? Colonel Coetlogon began to calculate how long the city would hold out. Perhaps it could not resist the Mahdi for a month, perhaps for more than a month ; but he began to talk of the necessity of a speedy retreat. It was clear that a climax was approaching, and that measures must be taken to forestall it at once. Accordingly, Sir Evelyn Baring, on receipt of final orders from England, presented an ultimatum to the Egyptian Government : the Ministry must either sanction the evacuation of the Sudan, or it must resign. The Ministry was obstinate, and, on January 7th, 1884, it resigned, to be replaced by a more pliable body of Pashas. On the same day, General Gordon arrived at Southampton.

He was over fifty, and he was still, by the world's measurements, an unimportant man. In spite of his achievements, in spite of a certain celebrity—for " Chinese Gordon " was still occasionally spoken of—he was unrecognized and almost unemployed. He had spent a lifetime in the dubious services of foreign Governments, punctuated by futile drudgeries at home ; and now, after a long idleness, he had been sent for—to do what ?—to look after the Congo for the King of the Belgians. At his age, even if he survived the work and the climate, he could hardly look forward to any subsequent appointment ; he would return from the Congo, old

and worn out, to a red-brick villa and extinction. Such were General Gordon's prospects on January 7th, 1884. By January 18th his name was on every tongue, he was the favourite of the nation, he had been declared to be the one man living capable of coping with the perils of the hour, he had been chosen, with unanimous approval, to perform a great task, and he had left England on a mission which was to bring him not only a boundless popularity but an immortal fame. The circumstances which led to a change so sudden and so remarkable are less easily explained than might have been wished. An ambiguity hangs over them—an ambiguity which the discretion of eminent persons has certainly not diminished. But some of the facts are clear enough.

The decision to withdraw from the Sudan had no sooner been taken than it had become evident that the operation would be a difficult and hazardous one, and that it would be necessary to send to Khartoum an emissary armed with special powers and possessed of special ability, to carry it out. Towards the end of November, somebody at the War Office—it is not clear who—had suggested that this emissary should be General Gordon. Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary, had thereupon telegraphed to Sir Evelyn Baring asking whether, in his opinion, the presence of General Gordon would be useful in Egypt; Sir Evelyn Baring had replied that the Egyptian Government were averse to this proposal, and the matter had

dropped. There was no further reference to Gordon in the official dispatches until after his return to England. Nor, before that date, was any allusion made to him, as a possible unraveller of the Sudan difficulty, in the Press. In all the discussions which followed the news of the Hicks disaster, his name is only to be found in occasional and incidental references to his work in the Sudan. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, which, more than any other newspaper, interested itself in Egyptian affairs, alluded to Gordon once or twice as a geographical expert; but, in an enumeration of the leading authorities on the Sudan, left him out of account altogether. Yet it was from the *Pall Mall Gazette* that the impulsion which projected him into a blaze of publicity finally came. Mr. Stead, its enterprising Editor, went down to Southampton the day after Gordon's arrival there, and obtained an interview. Now when he was in the mood—after a little b. and s., especially—no one was more capable than Gordon, with his facile speech and his free-and-easy manners, of furnishing good copy for a journalist; and Mr. Stead made the most of his opportunity. The interview, copious and pointed, was published next day in the most prominent part of the paper, together with a leading article, demanding that the General should be immediately dispatched to Khartoum with the widest powers. The rest of the Press, both in London and in the provinces, at once took up the cry. General Gordon was a capable and energetic officer, he was

a noble and God-fearing man, he was a national asset, he was a statesman in the highest sense of the word; the occasion was pressing and perilous; General Gordon had been for years Governor-General of the Sudan; General Gordon alone had the knowledge, the courage, the virtue, which would save the situation; General Gordon must go to Khartoum. So, for a week, the papers sang in chorus. But already those in high places had taken a step. Mr. Stead's interview appeared on the afternoon of January 9th, and on the morning of January 10th Lord Granville telegraphed to Sir Evelyn Baring, proposing, for a second time, that Gordon's services should be utilized in Egypt. But Sir Evelyn Baring, for the second time, rejected the proposal.

While these messages were flashing to and fro, Gordon himself was paying a visit to the Rev. Mr. Barnes at the Vicarage of Heavitree, near Exeter. The conversation ran chiefly on Biblical and spiritual matters—on the light thrown by the Old Testament upon the geography of Palestine, and on the relations between man and his Maker; but there were moments when topics of a more worldly interest arose. It happened that Sir Samuel Baker, Gordon's predecessor in Equatoria, lived in the neighbourhood. A meeting was arranged, and the two ex-Governors, with Mr. Barnes in attendance, went for a drive together. In the carriage, Sir Samuel Baker, taking up the tale of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, dilated upon the necessity of

his friend's returning to the Sudan as Governor-General. Gordon was silent; but Mr. Barnes noticed that his blue eyes flashed, while an eager expression passed over his face. Late that night, after the Vicar had retired to bed, he was surprised by the door suddenly opening, and by the appearance of his guest swiftly tripping into the room. "You saw me to-day?" the low voice abruptly questioned.—"You mean in the carriage?" replied the startled Mr. Barnes.—"Yes," came the reply; "you saw *me*—that was *myself*—the self I want to get rid of." There was a sliding movement, the door swung to, and the Vicar found himself alone again.

It was clear that a disturbing influence had found its way into Gordon's mind. His thoughts, wandering through Africa, flitted to the Sudan; they did not linger at the Congo. During the same visit he took the opportunity of calling upon Dr. Temple, the Bishop of Exeter, and asking him, merely as a hypothetical question, whether, in his opinion, Sudanese converts to Christianity might be permitted to keep three wives. His Lordship answered that this would be uncanonical.

A few days later it appeared that the conversation in the carriage at Heavitree had borne fruit. Gordon wrote a letter to Sir Samuel Baker further elaborating the opinions on the Sudan which he had already expressed in his interview with Mr. Stead; the letter was clearly intended for publication, and published it was, in the *Times* of January

14th. On the same day, Gordon's name began once more to buzz along the wires in secret questions and answers to and from the highest quarters.

"Might it not be advisable," telegraphed Lord Granville to Mr. Gladstone, "to put a little pressure on Baring, to induce him to accept the assistance of General Gordon?" Mr. Gladstone replied, also by a telegram, in the affirmative; and on the 15th Lord Wolseley telegraphed to Gordon begging him to come to London immediately. Lord Wolseley, who was one of Gordon's oldest friends, was at that time Adjutant-General of the Forces; there was a long interview; and, though the details of the conversation have never transpired, it is known that, in the course of it, Lord Wolseley asked Gordon if he would be willing to go to the Sudan, to which Gordon replied that there was only one objection—his prior engagement to the King of the Belgians. Before nightfall, Lord Granville, by private telegram, had "put a little pressure on Baring." "He had," he said, "heard indirectly that Gordon was ready to go at once to the Sudan on the following rather vague terms. His mission to be to report to Her Majesty's Government on the military situation, and to return without any further engagement. He would be under you for instructions and will send letters through you under flying seal. . . . He might be of use," Lord Granville added, "in informing you and us of the situation. It would be popular at home, but there may be countervailing objections.

Tell me," such was Lord Granville's concluding injunction, " your real opinion." It was the third time of asking, and Sir Evelyn Baring resisted no longer. " Gordon," he telegraphed on the 16th, " would be the best man if he will pledge himself to carry out the policy of withdrawing from the Sudan as quickly as is possible consistently with saving life. He must also understand that he must take his instructions from the British representative in Egypt. . . . I would rather have him than any one else, provided there is a perfectly clear understanding with him as to what his position is to be and what line of policy he is to carry out. Otherwise, not. . . . Whoever goes should be distinctly warned that he will undertake a service of great difficulty and danger." In the meantime, Gordon, with the Sudan upon his lips, with the Sudan in his imagination, had hurried to Brussels, to obtain from the King of the Belgians a reluctant consent to the postponement of his Congo mission. On the 17th he was recalled to London by a telegram from Lord Wolseley. On the 18th the final decision was made. " At noon," Gordon told the Rev. Mr. Barnes, " Wolseley came to me and took me to the Ministers. He went in and talked to the Ministers, and came back and said : ' Her Majesty's Government want you to undertake this. Government are determined to evacuate the Sudan, for they will not guarantee future government. Will you go and do it ? ' I said : ' Yes.' He said : ' Go in.' I went in and saw them. They

said: 'Did Wolseley tell you your orders?' I said: 'Yes.' I said: 'You will not guarantee future government of the Sudan, and you wish me to go up and evacuate now.' They said: 'Yes,' and it was over."

Such was the sequence of events which ended in General Gordon's last appointment. The precise motives of those responsible for these transactions are less easy to discern. It is difficult to understand what the reasons could have been which induced the Government, not only to override the hesitations of Sir Evelyn Baring, but to overlook the grave and obvious dangers involved in sending such a man as Gordon to the Sudan. The whole history of his life, the whole bent of his character, seemed to disqualify him for the task for which he had been chosen. He was before all things a fighter, an enthusiast, a bold adventurer; and he was now to be entrusted with the conduct of an inglorious retreat. He was alien to the subtleties of civilized statesmanship, he was unamenable to official control, he was incapable of the skilful management of delicate situations; and he was now to be placed in a position of great complexity, requiring at once a cool judgment, a clear perception of fact, and a fixed determination to carry out a line of policy laid down from above. He had, it is true, been Governor-General of the Sudan; but he was now to return to the scene of his greatness as the emissary of a defeated and humbled power; he was to be a fugitive where he had once

been a ruler ; the very success of his mission was to consist in establishing the triumph of those forces which he had spent years in trampling underfoot. All this should have been clear to those in authority, after a very little reflection. It was clear enough to Sir Evelyn Baring, though, with characteristic reticence, he had abstained from giving expression to his thoughts. But, even if a general acquaintance with Gordon's life and character were not sufficient to lead to these conclusions, he himself had taken care to put their validity beyond reasonable doubt. Both in his interview with Mr. Stead and in his letter to Sir Samuel Baker he had indicated unmistakably his own attitude towards the Sudan situation. The policy which he advocated, the state of feeling in which he showed himself to be, were diametrically opposed to the declared intentions of the Government. He was by no means in favour of withdrawing from the Sudan ; he was in favour, as might have been supposed, of vigorous military action. It might be necessary to abandon, for the time being, the more remote garrisons in Darfour and Equatoria ; but Khartoum must be held at all costs. To allow the Mahdi to enter Khartoum would not merely mean the return of the whole of the Sudan to barbarism, it would be a menace to the safety of Egypt herself. To attempt to protect Egypt against the Mahdi by fortifying her southern frontier was preposterous. "You might as well fortify against a fever." Arabia, Syria, the whole Mohammedan world,

would be shaken by the Mahdi's advance. "In self-defence," Gordon declared to Mr. Stead, "the policy of evacuation cannot possibly be justified." The true policy was obvious. A strong man—Sir Samuel Baker, perhaps—must be sent to Khartoum, with a large contingent of Indian and Turkish troops and with two millions of money. He would very soon overpower the Mahdi, whose forces would "fall to pieces of themselves." For in Gordon's opinion it was "an entire mistake to regard the Mahdi as in any sense a religious leader"; he would collapse as soon as he was face to face with an English general. Then the distant regions of Darfour and Equatoria could once more be occupied; their original Sultans could be reinstated; the whole country would be placed under civilized rule; and the slave-trade would be finally abolished. These were the views which Gordon publicly expressed on January 9th and on January 14th; and it certainly seems strange that on January 10th and on January 14th Lord Granville should have proposed, without a word of consultation with Gordon himself, to send him on a mission which involved, not the reconquest, but the abandonment, of the Sudan. Gordon, indeed, when he was actually approached by Lord Wolseley, had apparently agreed to become the agent of a policy which was exactly the reverse of his own. No doubt, too, it is possible for a subordinate to suppress his private convictions and to carry out loyally, in spite of them, the orders of his superiors.

But how rare are the qualities of self-control and wisdom which such a subordinate must possess! And how little reason there was to think that General Gordon possessed them!

In fact, the conduct of the Government wears so singular an appearance that it has seemed necessary to account for it by some ulterior explanation. It has often been asserted that the true cause of Gordon's appointment was the clamour in the Press. It is said—among others, by Sir Evelyn Baring himself, who has given something like an official sanction to this view of the case—that the Government could not resist the pressure of the newspapers and the feeling in the country which it indicated; that Ministers, carried off their feet by a wave of "Gordon cultus," were obliged to give way to the inevitable. But this suggestion is hardly supported by an examination of the facts. Already, early in December, and many weeks before Gordon's name had begun to figure in the newspapers, Lord Granville had made his first effort to induce Sir Evelyn Baring to accept Gordon's services. The first newspaper demand for a Gordon mission appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the afternoon of January 9th; and the very next morning Lord Granville was making his second telegraphic attack upon Sir Evelyn Baring. The feeling in the Press did not become general until the 11th, and on the 14th Lord Granville, in his telegram to Mr. Gladstone, for the third time proposed the appointment of Gordon. Clearly, on

the part of Lord Granville at any rate, there was no extreme desire to resist the wishes of the Press. Nor was the Government as a whole by any means incapable of ignoring public opinion: a few months were to show that, plainly enough. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that if Ministers had been opposed to the appointment of Gordon, he would never have been appointed. As it was, the newspapers were in fact forestalled, rather than followed, by the Government.

How, then, are we to explain the Government's action? Are we to suppose that its members, like the members of the public at large, were themselves carried away by a sudden enthusiasm, a sudden conviction that they had found their saviour, that General Gordon was the man—they did not quite know why, but that was of no consequence—the one man to get them out of the whole Sudan difficulty—they did not quite know how, but that was of no consequence either—if only he were sent to Khartoum? Doubtless even Cabinet Ministers are liable to such impulses; doubtless it is possible that the Cabinet of that day allowed itself to drift, out of mere lack of consideration, and judgment, and foresight, along the rapid stream of popular feeling towards the inevitable cataract. That may be so; yet there are indications that a more definite influence was at work. There was a section of the Government which had never become quite reconciled to the policy of withdrawing from the Sudan. To this section—we

may call it the imperialist section—which was led, inside the Cabinet, by Lord Hartington, and outside by Lord Wolseley, the policy which really commended itself was the very policy which had been outlined by General Gordon in his interview with Mr. Stead and his letter to Sir Samuel Baker. They saw that it might be necessary to abandon some of the outlying parts of the Sudan to the Mahdi; but the prospect of leaving the whole province in his hands was highly distasteful to them; above all, they dreaded the loss of Khartoum. Now, supposing that General Gordon, in response to a popular agitation in the Press, were sent to Khartoum, what would follow? Was it not at least possible that, once there, with his views and his character, he would, for some reason or other, refrain from carrying out a policy of pacific retreat? Was it not possible that in that case he might so involve the English Government that it would find itself obliged, almost imperceptibly perhaps, to substitute for its policy of withdrawal a policy of advance? Was it not possible that General Gordon might get into difficulties, that he might be surrounded and cut off from Egypt? If that were to happen, how could the English Government avoid the necessity of sending an expedition to rescue him? And, if an English expedition went to the Sudan, was it conceivable that it would leave the Mahdi as it found him? In short, would not the dispatch of General Gordon to Khartoum involve, almost

inevitably, the conquest of the Sudan by British troops, followed by a British occupation? And, behind all these questions, a still larger question loomed. The position of the English in Egypt itself was still ambiguous; the future was obscure; how long, in reality, would an English army remain in Egypt? Was not one thing, at least, obvious—that if the English were to conquer and occupy the Sudan, their evacuation of Egypt would become impossible?

With our present information, it would be rash to affirm that all, or any, of these considerations were present to the minds of the imperialist section of the Government. Yet it is difficult to believe that a man such as Lord Wolseley, for instance, with his knowledge of affairs and his knowledge of Gordon, could have altogether overlooked them. Lord Hartington, indeed, may well have failed to realize at once the implications of General Gordon's appointment—for it took Lord Hartington some time to realize the implications of anything; but Lord Hartington was very far from being a fool: and we may well suppose that he instinctively, perhaps subconsciously, apprehended the elements of a situation which he never formulated to himself. However that may be, certain circumstances are significant. It is significant that the go-between who acted as the Government's agent in its negotiations with Gordon was an imperialist—Lord Wolseley. It is significant that the "Ministers" whom Gordon finally interviewed, and who

actually determined his appointment, were by no means the whole of the Cabinet, but a small section of it, presided over by Lord Hartington. It is significant, too, that Gordon's mission was represented both to Sir Evelyn Baring, who was opposed to his appointment, and to Mr. Gladstone, who was opposed to an active policy in the Sudan, as a mission merely "to report"; while, no sooner was the mission actually decided upon, than it began to assume a very different complexion. In his final interview with the "Ministers," Gordon, we know (though he said nothing about it to the Rev. Mr. Barnes), threw out the suggestion that it might be as well to make him the Governor-General of the Sudan. The suggestion, for the moment, was not taken up; but it is obvious that a man does not propose to become a Governor-General in order to make a report.

We are in the region of speculations; one other presents itself. Was the movement in the Press during that second week of January a genuine movement, expressing a spontaneous wave of popular feeling? Or was it a cause of that feeling rather than an effect? The engineering of a newspaper agitation may not have been an impossibility —even so long ago as 1884. One would like to know more than one is ever likely to know of the relations of the imperialist section of the Government with Mr. Stead.

But it is time to return to the solidity of fact. Within a few hours of his interview with the

Ministers, Gordon had left England for ever. At eight o'clock in the evening there was a little gathering of elderly gentlemen at Victoria Station. Gordon, accompanied by Colonel Stewart, who was to act as his second-in-command, tripped on to the platform. Lord Granville bought the necessary tickets; the Duke of Cambridge opened the railway-carriage door. The General jumped into the train; and then Lord Wolseley appeared, carrying a leather bag, in which were two hundred pounds in gold, collected from friends at the last moment, for the contingencies of the journey. The bag was handed through the window. The train started. As it did so, Gordon leant out and addressed a last whispered question to Lord Wolseley. Yes, it had been done, Lord Wolseley had seen to it himself; next morning every member of the Cabinet would receive a copy of Dr. Samuel Clarke's *Scripture Promises*. That was all. The train rolled out of the station.

Eminent Victorians. 1918.

III

HILAIRE BELLOC

THE DEATH OF DANTON

[This extract records the last phase of the French Revolutionary Terror, when the two leaders of the extreme Jacobin party, Danton and Robespierre, had come into conflict and Robespierre had triumphed. Danton and his followers, Camille Desmoulins, Fabre D'Eglantine, Hérault de Séchelles, and Lacroix, were sent to the guillotine. Sanson, mentioned in the text, was the executioner ; Lucille, the wife of Camille Desmoulins.]

It was between half-past four and five o'clock in the evening of the same day, the 5th of April 1794, that the prisoners reappeared. Two carts were waiting for them at the great gate in the court of the Palais—the gate which is the inner entrance to the Conciergerie to-day. About the carts were a numerous escort mounted and with drawn swords, but the victims took their seats as they chose, and of the fifteen the Dantonists remained together. Hérault, Camille, Lacroix, Westermann, Fabre, Danton went up the last into the

second cart, and the procession moved out of the courtyard and turned to the left under the shadow of the Palais, and then to the left again round the Tour de L'Horloge, and so on to the quay. They passed the window of the tribunal, the window from which Danton's loud voice had been heard across the river; they went creaking slowly past the old Mairie, past the rooms that had been Roland's lodgings, till they came to the corner of the Pont Neuf; and as the carts turned from the trees of the Place Dauphine on to the open bridge, they left the shade and passed into the full blaze of the westering sun within an hour of its setting.

Early as was the season, the air was warm and pleasant, the leaves and the buds were out on the few trees, the sky was unclouded. All that fatal spring was summerlike, and this day was the calmest and most beautiful that it had known. The light, already tinged with evening, came flooding the houses of the north bank till their glass shone in the eyes. There it caught the Café de l'École where Danton had sat a young lawyer seven years before, and had seen the beauty of his first wife in her father's house; to the right the corner of the old Hôtel de Ville caught the glow; to the left the Louvre flamed with a hundred windows.

Where the light poured up the river and came reflected from the Seine on to the bridge, it marked out the terrible column that was moving ponderously forward to death. A great crowd, foolish, unstable, varied, of whom some sang, some ran to

catch a near sight of the "Indulgents," some pitied, and a few understood and despaired of the Republic—all these surging and jostling as a crowd will that is forced to a slow pace and confined by the narrowness of an old thoroughfare, stretched from one end of the bridge to the other, and you would have seen them in the sunlight, brilliant in the colours that men wore in those days, while here and there a red cap of liberty marked the line of heads.

But in the centre of this crowd, and showing above it, could be seen the group of men who were about to die. The carts hidden by the people, the horses' heads just showing above the mob, surrounded by the sharp gleams that only came from swords, there rose distinguished the figures of the Dantonists. There stood Hérault de Séchelles upright, his face contemptuous, his colour high, "as though he had just risen from a feast." There on the far side of the cart sat Fabre D'Eglantine, bound, ill, collapsed, his head resting on his chest, muttering and complaining. There on the left side, opposite Fabre, is Camille, bound but still frenzied, calling loudly to the people, raving, "Peuple, pauvre Peuple!" He still kept in his poet's head the dream of the People! They had been deceived, but they were just, they would save him. He wrestled with his ropes and tore his shirt open at the bosom, clenching his bound hands—clutched in his fingers through all the struggle shone the bright hair of Lucille. Danton stood up

immense and quiet between them. One of those broad shoulders touched D'Eglantine, the other Desmoulins; their souls leant upon his body. And such comfort as there was or control in the central group came out like warmth from the chief of these friends.

He had been their leader and their strength for five years: they were round him now like younger brothers orphaned. The weakness of one, the vices of another, came leaning for support on the great rock of his form. For these were not the Girondins, the admirable stoics, of whom each was a sufficient strength to his own soul: they were the Dantonists, who had been moulded and framed by the strength and genius of one man. He did not fail them a moment in the journey, and he died last to give them courage.

As they passed on and left the river, they lost the light again and plunged into shadow; the cool air was about them in the deep, narrow streets. They could see the light far above them only, as they turned into the gulf of the Rue St. Honoré, down which the lives of men poured like a stream to be lost and wasted in the Place de la Révolution. Up its steep sides echoed and re-echoed the noise of the mob like waves. They could see as they rolled slowly along the people at the windows, the men sitting in the cafés or standing up to watch them go by. One especially Danton saw suddenly and for a moment. He was standing with a drawing-book in his hand and sketching rapidly

with short interrupted glances. It was David, an enemy.

Then there appeared upon their left another sight ; it was the only one in that long hour which drove Danton out of his control : it was the house of Duplay. There, hidden somewhere behind the close shutters, was Robespierre. They all turned to it loudly, and the sentence was pronounced which some say God has executed—that it should disappear and not be known again, and be hidden by high walls and destroyed.

The house was silent, shut, blockaded. It was like a thing which is besieged and which turns its least sentient outer part to its enemies. It was beleaguered by the silent and unseen forces which we feel pressing everywhere upon the living. For it contained the man who had sent that cartload of his friends to death. Their fault had been to preach the permanent sentiments of mankind, to talk of mercy, and to recall in 1794 the great emotions of the early Revolution—the desire for the Republic where every kind of man could sit and laugh at the same table, the Republic of the Commensales. They were the true heirs of the spirit of the Federations, and it was for this that they were condemned. Even at this last moment there radiated from them the warmth of heart that proceeds from a group of friends and lovers till it blesses the whole of a nation with an equal affection. Theirs had been the instinct of and the faith in the happy life of the world. It was for this that the

Puritan had struck them down ; and yet it is the one spirit that runs through any enduring reform, the only spirit that can lead us at last to the Republic.

In a remote room, where the noise of the wheels could not reach him, sat the man who, by some fatal natural lack or some sin of ambition unrepented, had become the Inquisitor—the mad, narrow enemy of mercy and of all good things.

For a moment he and his error had the power to condemn, repeating a tragedy of which the world is never weary—the mean thing was killing the great.

Nevertheless, if you will consider the men in the tumbril, you will find them not to be pitied except for two things—that they were loved by women whom they could not see, and that they were dying in the best and latest time of their powerful youth. All these young men were loved, and in other things they should be counted fortunate. They had with their own persons already transformed the world. Here the writer knew that his talent, the words he had so carefully chosen and with such delight in his power, had not been wasted upon praise or fortune, but had achieved the very object. There the orator knew and could remember how his great voice had called up the armies and thrown back the kings.

But if the scene was a tragedy, it was a tragedy of the real that refused to follow the unities. All nature was at work, crowded into the Revolu-

tionary time, and the element that Shakespeare knew came in of itself—the eternal comedy that seems to us, according to our mood, the irony, the madness, or the cruelty of things, was fatally present to make the day complete ; and the grotesque, like a discordant note, contrasted with and emphasized the terrible.

Fabre, who had best known how omnipresent is this complexity—Fabre, who had said, " Between the giving and taking of snuff there is a comedy "—furnished the example now. Danton, hearing so much weakness and so many groans from the sick man said, " What is your complaint ? " He answered, " I have written a play called *The Maltese Orange*, and I fear the police have taken it, and that some one will steal it and get the fame." Poor Fabre ! It is lost, and no one has the ridicule of his little folly. Danton answered with a phrase to turn the blood : " Tais-toi ! Dans une semaine tu feras assez de vers," and imposed silence. Nor did this satisfy Fate ; there were other points in the framework of the incongruous which she loves to throw round terror. A play was running in the opera called the *10th of August* ; in this the Dantonists were represented on the stage. When the Dantonists were hardly buried it was played again that very night, and actors made up for Hérault and the rest passed before a public that ignored or had forgotten what the afternoon had seen. More than this, there was already set in type a verse which the street-hawkers cried and

sold that very night. For the sake of its coincidence I will take the liberty of translating it into rhymed heroics :

"When Danton, Desmoulins, and D'Eglantine
Were ferried over to the world unseen,
Charon, that equitable citizen,
Handed their change to these distinguished men.
'Pray keep the change,' they cried ; 'we pay the fare
For Couthon, and St. Just, and Robespierre.'"

Danton spared only Camille, and as he did not stop appealing to the people, told him gently to cease. "Leave the rabble there," he said, "leave them alone." But for himself he kept on throwing angry jests at death. "May I sing?" he said to the executioner. Sanson thought he might, for all he knew. Then Danton said to him, "I have made some verses, and I will sing them." He sang loudly a verse of the fall of Robespierre, and then laughed as though he had been at the old café with his friends.

There was a man (Arnault of the Academy) who lived afterwards to a great age, and who happened to be crossing the Rue St. Honoré as the carts went past. In a Paris that had all its business to do, many such men came and went, almost forgetting that politics existed even then. But this batch of prisoners haunted him. He had seen Danton standing singing with laughter; he hurried on to the

Rue de la Monnaie, had his say with Michael, who was awaiting him, and then, full of the scene, ran back across the Tuileries gardens, and pressing his face to the railings looked over the great Place de la Révolution. The convoy had arrived, the carts stood at the foot of the guillotine, and his memory of the scene is the basis of its history.

It was close on six, and the sun was nearly set behind the trees of the Étoile ; it reddened the great plaster statue of Liberty which stood in the middle of the Place, where the obelisk is now, and to which Madame Roland delivered her last phrase. It sent a level beam upon the vast crowd that filled the square, and cast long shadows, sending behind the guillotine a dark lane over the people. The day had remained serene and beautiful to the last, the sky was stainless, and the west shone like a forge. Against it, one by one, appeared the figures of the condemned. Hérault de Séchelles, straight and generous in his bearing, first showed against the light, standing on the high scaffold conspicuous. He looked at the Garde-Meuble, and from one of its high windows a woman's hand found it possible to wave a farewell. Lacroix next, equally alone ; Camille, grown easy and self-controlled, was the third. One by one they came up the few steps, stood clearly for a moment in the fierce light, black or framed in scarlet, and went down.

Danton was the last. He had stood unmoved at the foot of the steps as his friends died. Trying to embrace Hérault before he went up, roughly

rebuking the executioner who tore them asunder, waiting his time without passion, he heard the repeated fall of the knife in the silence of the crowd. His great figure, more majestic than in the days of his triumph, came against the sunset. The man who watched it from the Tuileries gate grew half afraid, and tells us that he understood for a moment what kind of things Dante himself had seen. By an accident he had to wait some seconds longer than the rest ; the executioner heard him muttering, "I shall never see her again . . . no weakness," but his only movement was to gaze over the crowd. They say that a face met his, and that a sacramental hand was raised in absolution.

He stood thus conspicuous for a moment over the people whom he had so often swayed. In that attitude he remains for history. When death suddenly strikes a friend, the picture which we carry of him in our minds is that of vigorous life. His last laughter, his last tones of health, his rapid step, or his animated gesture reproduce his image for ever. So it is with Danton ; there is no mask of Danton dead, nor can you complete his story with the sense of repose. We cannot see his face in the calm either of triumph or of sleep—the brows grown level, the lips satisfied, the eyelids closed. He will stand through whatever centuries the story of the Revolution may be told as he stood on the scaffold looking westward and transfigured by the red sun, still courageous, still powerful in his words, and still instinct with that peculiar energy, self-

forming, self-governing, and whole. He has in his final moment the bearing of the tribune, the glance that had mastered the danger in Belgium, the force that had nailed Roland to his post in September, and that had commanded the first Committee. The Republic that he desired, and that will come, was proved in his carriage, and passed from him into the crowd.

When Sanson put a hand upon his shoulder the ghost of Mirabeau stood by his side and inspired him with the pride that had brightened the death-chamber of three years before. He said, "Show my head to the people; it is well worth the while." Then they did what they had to do, and without any kind of fear, his great soul went down the turning in the road.

They showed his head to the people, and the sun set. There rose at once the confused noise of a thousand voices that rejoiced, or questioned, or despaired, and in the gathering darkness the Parisians returned through the narrow streets eastward to their homes.

Danton (pages 273–281). 1899.

IV

HAROLD NICOLSON

A RESCUE PARTY FOR GREECE

[In 1823 Greece was in insurrection against Turkey; and, fired by the glories of her past, Byron volunteered to go to her assistance. In July he left the Casa Saluzzo, near Genoa, where he had been living, to embark on his expedition. The following extract describes the party he took with him. Of the persons referred to in the text, but not described, Fletcher and Tita were his servants; Hobhouse was an English friend; Lady Blessington, an English acquaintance, recently in Genoa; Medwin, an English admirer of Byron; Claire Clairmont, a former mistress of Byron, mother of his daughter Allegra; Alexander Mavrocordato, a Greek patriot; Pietro Gamba, the brother of Byron's mistress, Countess Guiccioli, and associated with him in his Greek aspirations. There are also references to Shelley, who was with Byron during the last period of his life, together with his friends the Williamses, and also to Leigh Hunt the author, who has lately come to Italy at Byron's invitation.]

It would be idle to pretend that Byron set out upon this his last journey with any very spirited en-

thusiasm, either for the cause which he was embracing or for the particular functions which he would be called upon to fulfil. Nor would it be honest to portray as some reckless Elizabethan, intent upon the gain and glory of a new endurance, the irresolute and dyspeptic little man who, on that July evening, limped gloomily up the gangway of the *Hercules*. For when it had come to packing up, and destroying old letters, and explaining to Barry what was to be done with the books, and totting up the accounts, and sending the horses down to the harbour, and finding everything at the Casa Saluzzo hourly more disintegrated and uncomfortable, he began, definitely and indignantly, to curse the whole undertaking. It was always like that: people never left one alone; there he was, good-natured and kindly, and they came along and took advantage of him, and extracted promises, and imposed upon him generally. Once again he had been caught in a chain of circumstances: there had been his first visit to Greece, and *Childe Harold*, and *The Corsair*, and that silly passage about the "hereditary bondsmen"; and there had been Hobhouse (damn Hobhouse!), and that egregious ass Trelawny. And as a result here was he, who had never done any harm to any one, sitting alone in the Casa Saluzzo, with his household gods once again dismantled around him, and his bulldog growling now and then at the distant voice of Trelawny thundering orders to the servants.

Of all forms of cant, this cant of romanticism was

the most insufferable. There was Trelawny, for instance, trying to look like Lara, with his sham eagle eyes, his sham disordered hair, his sham abrupt manners. Why couldn't Trelawny behave quietly and like a man of decent breeding? Surely, if they were committed to this Greek scrape it would be better to take the thing soberly and calmly, instead of all this dust and bustle, of all this cant about Causes, and Liberty, and Adventure. How he *loathed* adventures! At the mere word he ground his teeth in fury.

This petulant reaction against his own decisions had been growing upon him ever since he found himself committed to the undertaking. "It is not pleasant," he had remarked to Lady Blessington, "that my eyes should never open to the folly of the undertakings passion prompts me to engage in, until I am so far embarked that retreat (at least with honour) is impossible, and my 'mal à propos sagesse' arrives, to scare away the enthusiasm that led to the undertaking, and which is so requisite to carry it on. It is all an uphill affair with me afterwards: I cannot for my life 'échauffer' my imagination again; and my position excites such ludicrous images and thoughts in my own mind that the whole subject, which, seen through the veil of passion, looked fit for a sublime epic, and I one of its heroes, examined now through reason's glass appears fit only for a travestie, and my poor self a Major Sturgeon, marching and countermarching, not from Acton to Ealing, or from

Ealing to Acton, but from Corinth to Athens, and from Athens to Corinth. Yet, hang it," continued he, " these very names ought to chase away every idea of the ludicrous ; but the laughing devils will return, and make a mockery of everything, as with me there is, as Napoleon said, but one step between the sublime and the ridiculous. Well, *if I do* (and this *if* is a grand *peut-être* in my future history) outlive the campaign, I shall write two poems on the subject—one an epic, and the other a burlesque, in which none shall be spared, and myself least of all."

The waves of indignation which surged up in him as the moment actually approached for his departure are not, however, to be explained solely by this superficial ruffling of his amazingly fluid character. It was not merely the irritating turmoil of the last preparations, the difficulty which he had always experienced in wresting himself away from any place where he had taken root. It was not merely the vivid realization of the difficulties which would assail him in Greece, a realization which contrasted so jarringly with the vapid optimism of his companions. It was a deep and superstitious impression that the chapter which was opening would be the final chapter ; it was an abiding presentiment that he would not return alive. " You will think me," he had said to Lady Blessington, " more superstitious than ever, when I tell you that I have a presentiment that I shall die in Greece. I hope it may be in action, for that

would be a good finish to a very 'triste' existence, and I have a horror of death-bed scenes ; but as I have not been famous for my luck in life, most probably I shall not have more in the manner of my death, and that I may draw my last sigh, not on the field of glory, but on the bed of disease. I very nearly died when I was in Greece in my youth ; perhaps as things have turned out it would have been well if I had ; I should have lost nothing, and the world very little, and I would have escaped many cares, for God knows I have had enough of one kind or another. But I am getting gloomy, and looking either back or forward is not calculated to enliven me. One of the reasons why I quiz my friends in conversation is that it keeps me from thinking of myself. You laugh, but it is true."

To this conviction that he was journeying to his death he bowed his head with an unflinching resignation : from the first he accepted it as inevitable. " There was a helplessness about Byron, a sort of abandonment of himself to his destiny, as he called it, that commonplace people can as little pity as understand."

For we must remember that Byron, with all his earthiness, his excessive " empeiria and mondanité," as Goethe called it, was haunted by a morbid fear of the supernatural. Even now, in his thirty-sixth year, he would be frightened sometimes at night-time, and before entering the vast baronial bed which had so shocked the refined taste of Lady Blessington, he would ask Fletcher to make sure, to

make quite sure, that there was no one, that there was *nothing*, lurking underneath ; and every night the pistols would be placed within his reach. Tita or Fletcher had contracted the habit of remaining within call should their master shriek with nightmare, and when he did so, they would hurry in with soda water and little brass Genoese oil-flares, and the shadows of the four coronets would sway and flicker thereat upon the vaulted ceiling. Byron would be reassured, and thank them warmly. They drew their own conclusions from these oft-repeated incidents. As for Tita, with his dog-like devotion, *he* had always known that milord, so generous and thoughtful on every occasion, was hopelessly, though very amiably, insane ; and Tita had ceased to wonder at such outbursts. But Fletcher, who remembered similar incidents in the old Newstead days, attributed their recent renewal to that Mr. Shelley, who had a habit, even when the company had just sat down to table, of hopping about screaming that he had seen a lady with eyes in her bosom, or a child calling to him from the sea, or even a phantom of himself passing, in a garden hat, in front of the window. This sort of thing had been very bad for his master, but it was not for Fletcher to criticize. " My lord," he would sigh, " may be very odd, but he has such a good heart." And he left it at that.

For Byron himself, this particular form of neurosis had confirmed his inherited tendency to believe absolutely in prophecies, coincidences, pre-

sentiments, and forebodings. "No consideration," he would say, "can induce me to undertake anything either on a Friday or a Sunday." At the back of his mind there remained the recollection of that destiny which Mrs. Williams, the fortune-teller of Cheltenham, had predicted to his mother in 1801. He was to marry twice, the second time to a foreign lady. This forecast had, in all but legal form, been oppressively fulfilled. And above all "he was to beware of his thirty-seventh year." The span of life vouchsafed to him by Mrs. Williams was approaching its conclusion; it coincided with the term which had been allotted to his father. There could be no doubt that Mrs. Williams had prophesied correctly, and that it was this senseless journey to Greece which was to justify her warning.

Excessive always in the dramatization of his own circumstances, Byron, from the moment that he realized the coincidence between this prophecy and his impending enterprise, assumed that sentence of death, irrevocable and ineluctable, had already been passed. It was as a doomed victim that he embarked at Genoa, picturing himself half-seriously and half-humorously as the Iphigenia of this second Iliad. And it was with the reckless fatalism thus engendered that he chose as the defiant date of his embarkation a Sunday and the 13th of the month.

The passengers who assembled under the hot evening sun upon the deck of the *Hercules* were, to

say the least, heterogeneous. They were all, in their different ways, afraid of Byron. He stood there in his blue cap and his white trousers, silent, morose, and apparently disinterested, tugging and jerking his lace-fringed handkerchief between his small white hands. To some of them his insouciance, his melancholy, and his detachment were highly impressive; to Trelawny, however, they were merely exasperating. For Trelawny, it must be remembered, did not care for Byron.

This adventurous younger son of a Cornish family was then in his thirty-second year. He had in 1811 deserted from the Royal Navy, and launched upon those lurid personal experiences which he was in 1831 to weave into an autobiography of doubtful veracity, but of indubitable imaginative force. In 1813 he returned to England, married an extravagant and foolish wife, and disappeared from romance for seven years. He emerges again in the summer of 1820 in the company of his friend Captain Roberts, drinking his early morning coffee in the *salle à manger* of the Hôtel de l'Ancre at Ouchy. A party of hob-nailed and exuberant English tourists clattered into the room; there were two ladies, and a bony, angular gentleman with a strong Cumberland accent, his nose and lips blotched and blistered by exposure to the Alpine snows. Trelawny was impressed by the "dogmatic and self-confident" opinions expressed by this singular person, as well as by the "precision and quaintness" of his language. He was even more en-

tranced when he heard from Captain Roberts that the strangers were Mr. William Wordsworth, with his wife and his sister Dorothy.

"Who," records Trelawny, "could have divined this? I could see no trace, in the hard features and weather-stained brow of the outer man, of the divinity within him. In a few minutes the travellers reappeared; we cordially shook hands, and agreed to meet again at Geneva. Now that I knew that I was talking to one of the veterans of the gentle craft, as there was no time to waste in idle ceremony, I asked him abruptly what he thought of Shelley as a poet.

"'Nothing,'" he replied as abruptly.

"Seeing my surprise, he added, 'A poet who has not produced a good poem before he is twenty-five, we may conclude cannot, and never will do so.'

"'*The Cenci!*' I said eagerly.

"'Won't do,' he replied, shaking his head, as he got into the carriage; a rough-coated Scotch terrier followed him.

"'This hairy fellow is our flea-trap,' he shouted out as they started off.

"When I recovered from the shock of having heard the harsh sentence passed by an elder bard on a younger brother of the Muses, I exclaimed . . ."

It matters little perhaps what Trelawny exclaimed on that occasion, but his interest in Shelley, stimulated by Mr. Wordsworth's truculence on the subject, was within the next week fired by the enthusiasm of Thomas Medwin and the two

Williamses, whom he met in Geneva. A few months later we find Trelawny in his one-horse cabriolet bumping through France and Switzerland, embarked in the company of Captain Roberts on a literary pilgrimage to Pisa. He arrived on January 14th, 1822. "Trelawny," records Mrs. Shelley in her diary five days subsequently, "is extravagant—'un giovane stravagante'—partly natural, and partly, perhaps, put on, but it suits him well; and if his abrupt but not unpolished manners be assumed, they are nevertheless in unison with his Moorish face (for he looks Oriental, yet not Asiatic), his dark hair, his Herculean form; and then there is an air of extreme good nature which pervades his whole countenance, especially when he smiles, which assures me that his heart is good."

In this Mrs. Shelley was mistaken: Trelawny had no heart at all; all that he possessed was a capacity, an excessive capacity, for egoistic enthusiasms. Besides, Trelawny was a liar and a cad.

His subsequent relations with the "lieta brigata" at Pisa; the story of how he arranged for Shelley's cremation; of how he snatched his heart out of the fire and gave it to Leigh Hunt, who refused at first to surrender it to Mrs. Shelley; of how he fell in love both with Claire Clairmont and with Mrs. Shelley, are recorded with an undoubted touch of genius in the letters edited in 1910 by Mr. Buxton Forman, and predominantly in the two astonishing volumes published in 1858 under the title *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and*

Byron, and republished in 1878 in an amended and watered form, and with the title altered to *Records of Shelley, Byron, and the Author.*

Trelawny, as I have already indicated, regarded Byron with a deep-rooted, if somewhat tortuous, dislike. The causes of this antipathy are not hard to discover. Whatever impression Trelawny may have desired to convey in the records which he published thirty-six years later, the essential purpose of his pilgrimage to Pisa was, we may well suppose, to visit Byron, whose *Lara* and *Conrad* he had taken as the models of his life and behaviour, and not, or at least not primarily, to see Shelley. But Byron, for his part, did not regard either Trelawny or his pilgrimage with any seriousness: he took a mischievous delight in adopting in his relations with Trelawny the very posture which, he well knew, would most effectively extinguish the ardour of that enthusiast—he adopted the posture of a regency beau. He would swim with Trelawny, and play billiards with him, and allow him to manage the yacht. But all the time he would make it clear how much his young friend had missed by not being a man of fashion, how very out of date and provincial it was of him to admire and to imitate the opinions and exploits of the Corsair. "How he hates Byron," the gullible Mr. William Graham remarked to Claire Clairmont fifty-five years later, when discussing Trelawny's book with that untruthful and, by then, senile wanton. "Well, Byron snubbed him, you know,"

replied Claire Clairmont : " he said, ' Tre was an excellent fellow until he took to imitating my *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan.*' This got to Trelawny's ears, and he never forgave Byron for it."

The injury which had thereby been inflicted upon Trelawny's rancorous vanity was still smarting when he embarked that evening upon the *Hercules.* He was at pains, even, to explain to his particular cronies how it came that he, who had so defiantly, behind his back, derided the tin god of Europe, should now be found proceeding as a member of his staff to Greece. " Lord B. and I," he wrote to Captain Roberts, " are extraordinarily thick. We are inseparables ; but mind, this does not flatter me. He has known me long enough to see the sacrifices I make in devoting myself to serve him. This is new to him, who is surrounded by mercenaries."

And to Claire Clairmont he wrote as follows :

> " I have long contemplated this, but I was deterred by the fear that an unknown stranger without money, etc., would be ill received. I now go under better auspices. L. B. is one of the Greek Committee ; he takes out arms, ammunition, money, and protection to them. *When once there I can shift for myself*—and shall see what is to be done."

The italics are mine.

The latent and watchful hostility of Trelawny

stands in marked contrast to the affection and veneration with which their leader was regarded by the other members of the company. There was Pietro Gamba, conscientious, unfortunate, and evanescent; there was M. Schilizzi, a Greek relative of Alexander Mavrocordato, who had been accorded a passage; there was Fletcher, and Tita Falciere, and Lega Zambelli, the intendant of Byron's household; there was Trelawny's negro groom, who was subsequently transferred to Byron's personal service; there were the five horses; there was the bulldog "Moretto" and the Newfoundland "Lion," a present from Lieut. Le Mesurier of the British Navy; there were 10,000 Spanish dollars in ready money and bills of exchange for 40,000 more; there were medical stores sufficient for the needs of a regiment; and finally there was Dr. Francesco Bruno, "personal physician to Lord Byron," and the subsequent inheritor of much unpleasant notoriety.

The selection of this intelligent but timid student of the art of medicine for the post of attendant surgeon and doctor was due partly to Byron's own instincts of economy, and partly to the inefficiency of Pietro Gamba. The former did not wish to engage an Englishman, who would doubtless demand a high salary, and the latter had no idea whatever how a suitable Italian could be secured. He wrote vaguely to Leghorn and Pisa, and asked Professor Vaccà whether he could recommend a young man from his own school of medicine.

Gamba's letter, however, arrived too late to produce any very useful result. Vaccà replied that had he received the inquiry earlier, he would have been able to select one of his own more promising pupils; he would even have gone with them himself, were it not for the many ties and responsibilities which kept him at Pisa. The personal physician had therefore to be selected at the last moment, and almost at random, and it was upon the unfortunate head of the youthful Bruno, who was recommended by Dr. Alexander, the English doctor at Genoa, that the selection fell. Dr. Bruno, that "unfledged student," as Trelawny called him, was obviously ill at ease upon the *Hercules*. He skulked about timidly, and started when he was spoken to. Many months later he confessed to Gamba that the first fortnight of his journey had been for him a period of "perpetual terror," since he had been informed that if he committed the slightest fault Lord Byron would have him torn to pieces by his dogs, which he kept for that purpose, or would order his "Tartar" to dash his brains out. It was only when they reached the Adriatic that Dr. Bruno realized that the said "Tartar" was in fact but Tita Falciere, gentlest of all Venetian gondolieri, and that as for the dogs, "Lion" was in no way dangerous, and "Moretto" dangerous only if annoyed. But the "perpetual terror," as we shall see, remained with Dr. Francesco Bruno till the end.

Byron: The last Journey. 1924.

V

PHILIP GUEDALLA

WELLINGTON AT WATERLOO

[This extract gives an account of the Duke of Wellington during the Waterloo Campaign. Of the other persons referred to in the text Creevey, a member of the Whig Opposition in Parliament, was staying in Brussels at the time. So was Lady Frances Webster, a friend of Wellington. On page 83 Mr. Guedalla quotes the famous passage about George Osborne's death from Thackeray's *Vanity Fair.*]

The June days went by in Brussels. Late one Thursday carriages were clattering over the cobbles, and a sound of dance-music drifted into the summer night. The Duke was there. He had been working late with Müffling and the Staff; for he had news that afternoon that the French had passed the frontier opposite the Prussians, and orders had been sent to move the army in the direction of Quatre Bras. But it was just as well to reassure the doubters by showing up at the ball; and when he made his bow, Mr. Creevey's girls found him

looking as composed as ever ; though one young lady, who shared a sofa with him, thought him quite preoccupied and noticed how he kept turning round and giving orders. More news arrived while they were all at supper ; and he desired the senior officers to leave unobtrusively. He said something civil to his host and slipped off with him to look at a map, remarking when the door closed behind them that Napoleon had *humbugged* him, by God ! and gained twenty-four hours' march upon him. Asked his intentions, he replied that he proposed to concentrate at Quatre Bras—" but we shall not stop him there, and if so, I must fight him "—his thumbnail traced a line on the map behind Hougoumont and La Haye Sainte—" *here.*" Then he went off to bed. It was a little after two ; and Mr. Creevey, who had stayed at home that evening and heard a deal of hammering on doors along his street, was writing in his Journal :

> " *June* 16. *Friday morning,* ½ *past two.*—The girls just returned from a ball at the Duke of Richmond's . . ."

The marching bayonets went down the empty streets, and in the summer dawn the pipes went by.

He followed them next morning (a gleeful English maid, who caught a glimpse of him as she was opening the shutters, cried, " Oh, my lady, get up quick ; there he goes, God bless him, and he will not come back till he is King of France ! ") ;

and before noon he was staring at the woods beyond Quatre Bras. Then he rode over to the Prussians and had a word with Blücher. Their dispositions did not impress him, since they were rather recklessly aligned (in contrast with his own judicious practice) upon an exposed slope; and he said grimly that if they fought there, they would be damnably mauled. For his ally's benefit he translated this uncompromising view into the milder sentiment that every man, of course, knew his own troops, but that if his own were so disposed, he should expect them to be beaten. His expectation was not disappointed, since the Emperor shattered them that evening at Ligny. But Wellington employed the afternoon at Quatre Bras, where Ney flung four thousand men away in wild attacks. They heard the guns in Brussels; and the inquiring Creevey strolled on the ramparts, while sixteen miles away the Duke was steadying a line which was often far from steady. It was a wild affair of French lancers wheeling in the corn and redcoats hurrying up the long road from Brussels. Once Wellington was almost caught in a flurry of French cavalry far out beyond his firing-line. The ditch behind him was lined with Highlanders; and with a timely reminiscence of the hunting-field he shouted to them to lie still, put his horse at the unusual obstacle, and cleared it, resuming a less exciting position of command. And once his deep voice was heard calling, "Ninety-second, don't fire till I tell you." For he was

everywhere as usual; while Ney, whose military talents were almost wholly pugilistic, raged up and down the line watching his cavalry surge vainly round the British squares. But the price paid was tolerably high, although a great lady in Brussels cooed consolingly to a friend that "poor Sir D. Pack is severely wounded, and the poor Duke of Brunswick died of his wounds. . . . The Scotch were chiefly engaged, so there are no officers wounded that one knows."

But the reverse at Ligny served to nullify any advantage gained by the Duke at Quatre Bras; and he grimly observed that "old Blücher has had a damned good hiding, and has gone eighteen miles to the rear. We must do the same. I suppose they'll say in England that we have been licked; well, I can't help that." He took this unpalatable decision early the next morning; but (it was typical of him) the retreat was deferred until his men had cooked a meal. With that inside them they would, he felt, be more equal to the perils of a retirement with Napoleon at their heels. The red columns filed off towards Brussels; and as they went, the Duke remarked with obvious relief, "Well, there is the last of the infantry gone, and I don't care now." The cavalry, he knew, could look after themselves with a few guns to hold them. He watched the perilous retreat, occasionally sitting in a field and laughing over some old English newspapers, or turning his glass on the immobile French. The morning opened

brightly ; but as the day wore on, there was a stillness, and a pile of leaden clouds climbed slowly up a sultry sky. The storm broke in floods of rain, as his cavalry were drawing off ; and the thunder drowned the sharper note of guns, while the rockets (in fulfilment of the Duke's most sceptical anticipations) sputtered and fizzed and not infrequently exploded backwards. The rain drove down and the long *pavé* gleamed before them, as they struggled back towards the ridge in front of Waterloo, the French plodding after them across the sodden fields.

There was a night of damp discomfort ; but food was waiting in the British bivouacs. They lit fires, and Peninsula veterans dispensed derisive consolations, observing cheerfully to new-comers, " Oho, my boy ! this is but child's play to what *we* saw in Spain," and " Lord have mercy upon your poor tender carcass. What would such as you have done in the Pyrenees ? " Uxbridge, his second-in-command, came to Wellington and asked what he proposed to do. The Duke countered with a question :

" Who will attack the first to-morrow—I or Buonaparte ? "

" Buonaparte."

" Well," said the Duke, " Buonaparte has not given me any idea of his projects ; and as my plans will depend upon his, how can you expect me to tell you what mine are ? "

Then he rose and, laying a hand upon the

other's shoulder, said kindly, " There is one thing certain, Uxbridge ; that is, that whatever happens you and I will do our duty."

For his belief in plans was never strong. He once said pityingly of the Marshals that " they planned their campaigns just as you might make a splendid set of harness. It looks very well, and answers very well, until it gets broken ; and then you are done for. Now, I made my campaigns of ropes. If anything went wrong, I tied a knot ; and went on." Blücher had fallen back from Ligny ; so Wellington had tied a knot, conforming with his ally's retreat by falling back to Waterloo. Now he was comfortably established on the ridge ; but who could say what would happen next ? If they attacked him in position, it might be Busaco over again. Or they might know their business better and edge round his right. In that event they might give an opening—and then it would be Salamanca—or they might manœuvre him from Waterloo without a battle. That would cost him Brussels and send the French royalties scampering from Ghent. It was too much to hope that Napoleon would choose a frontal attack, when the manœuvre round his flank promised so richly ; and Wellington inclined to think that he would choose the latter course. So he sat writing in the night—to warn the royalties at Ghent, to suggest that Lady Frances Webster would be wise to leave at once for Antwerp, and to beg some one in authority in Brussels to " keep the English quiet if you can.

Let them all prepare to move, but neither be in a hurry or a fright, as all will yet turn out well." And all night long the summer rain drove down on sodden fields ; the trees dripped at Hougoumont ; gleaming pools stood in the little farmyard at La Haye Sainte ; somewhere across the darkness a square figure in a long grey coat was straining eager eyes into the night for a glimpse of Wellington's camp-fires ; and two armies slept in the busy whisper of the rain.

A pale dawn broke over Belgium. The Emperor was breakfasting by eight o'clock. Soult was uneasy ; Ney prophesied that Wellington would slip away again ; but Napoleon swept away all objections.

"*Il n'est plus temps. Wellington s'exposerait à une perte certaine. Il a jeté les dés, et ils sont pour nous.*"

When Soult pressed him to call up reinforcements, he snapped contemptuously, "*Parce que vous avez été battu par Wellington, vous le regardez comme un grand général. Et, moi je vous dis que Wellington est un mauvais général, que les Anglais sont de mauvaises troupes, et que ce sera l'affaire d'un déjeuner.*"

"*Je le souhaite,*" replied the Marshal glumly.

The Emperor sailed before gusts of optimism that morning. Reille, who came in a little later, altogether failed to share his enthusiasm for a frontal attack on Wellington. But then Reille had served in Spain ; even at Quatre Bras he shied nervously from an apparently unguarded position, because "*ce pourrait bien être une bataille d'Espagne—*

les troupes anglaises se montreraient quand il en serait temps" ; and now the sight of a British line behind an easy slope made him uncomfortable—he had seen something of the kind before. But the Emperor was rarely a good listener.

Besides, he meant to have his victory. A victory would mean so much—the road to Brussels open, France reassured by a familiar bulletin, King Louis made ridiculous again by further flight, the British driven into the sea at last, and (who knows?) a change of Government in London, the enlightened Whigs in office, and a world at peace with his tricolour floating peacefully above the Tuileries. The sky was clearing now ; a breeze sprang up ; and ground would soon be dry enough for guns to move. He would have his victory ; and June 18th should take its place among his anniversaries.

" *Nous coucherons ce soir*," he said, " *à Bruxelles.*"

Across the little valley Wellington was waiting on that Sunday morning in his blue frock-coat and the low cocked-hat that bore the black cockade of England with the colours of Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands. His mixed command was, if anything, more mixed than ever, since he had left some of his British troops to guard his right flank and the road to Ostend ; and his foreigners outnumbered them by two to one. Still, he had got them in position on a ridge—one of his favourite ridges with an easy slope towards the enemy and shelter for his men behind its crest. The French outnumbered them ; the Emperor had 70,000 men

to the Duke's 63,000 ; and he had only 156 guns against 266 in the hands of that incomparable artillerist. But if Blücher was to be believed, some Prussians would be coming later. The old *sabreur* had been unhorsed and ridden over at Ligny ; but he dosed himself with a deadly brew of gin and rhubarb (and apologized to a British officer whom he embraced, observing cheerfully, " *Ich stinke etwas* ") ; and somewhere across the sodden fields his dark columns wound towards the Emperor's unguarded flank.

The Duke was waiting. As it was showery that morning, he kept putting on a cloak, " because I never get wet when I can help it." He waited for the French manœuvre to begin ; had not Marmont manœuvred " in the usual French style " at Salamanca ? But the Emperor made no attempt to manœuvre. Then it was not to be another Salamanca. For they came plunging straight at the British line in columns of attack, just as he had seen them when the French columns charged the heights above Vimeiro, and Masséna's men struggled up the slope at Busaco. It was to be the old style of attack, to which he knew an answer that had never failed—the waiting line behind the crest, the volley long deferred, and then the bayonet. (As he wrote afterwards to Beresford, the Emperor " did not manœuvre at all. He just moved forward in the old style, in columns, and was driven off in the old style.") But there were variations ; for the fighting surged round the outworks of his line

at Hougoumont and La Haye Sainte. Then, the columns foiled, a stranger variation appeared, as the French cavalry came thundering uphill against his line. His infantry formed square to meet them, and the delighted gunners blazed into the advancing target, until they scampered off to safety in the nearest square, bowling a wheel from each dismantled gun before them, as the bewildered horsemen rode helplessly among the bristling squares of inhospitable bayonets. It was a picturesque, but scarcely an alarming, experience. "I had the infantry," as he wrote afterwards, "for some time in squares, and we had the French cavalry walking about us as if they had been our own. I never saw the British infantry behave so well."

The Duke, as usual, was everywhere, fighting his line along the ridge as a commander fights his ship in action. He rode "Copenhagen"; and all day long the chestnut carried him along the lanes of weary men. Each shift of the interminable battle elicited a gruff comment or an order scrawled on a scrap of parchment. He saw the Nassauers pressed out of Hougoumont, and acidly observed to an Austrian General, "*Mais, enfin, c'est avec ces Messieurs-là qu'il faut que nous gagnions la bataille*," put in the Guards to retake the position with, "There, my lads, in with you—let me see no more of you," and watched Mercer's guns dash into place between two squares with an appreciative, "Ah! that's the way I like to see horse artillery move." When the Life Guards

charged, a deep voice was at hand to say, " Now, gentlemen, for the honour of the Household Troops " ; and when they rode back, a low cocked-hat was raised with, " Life Guards ! I thank you." At one moment he formed a line of shaky infantry himself, like any company-commander, within twenty yards of the flash of an oncoming French column. And as the tide of cavalry was ebbing down the trampled slope, he asked the Rifles in his quiet manner to " drive those fellows away."

The light was failing now ; and he rode down the line before the Guard was launched in the last charge of the Empire. The shadows lengthened from the west, as the tall bearskins came slowly on behind six Generals and a Marshal walking (for it was Ney) with a drawn sword. They were still coming on " in the old style " ; and the waiting line held back its fire in the Peninsular fashion, until the Duke was heard calling, " Now, Maitland ! Now's your time." The volley crashed ; and as the smoke drifted into the sunset, the Guard broke—and with the Guard the memory of Austerlitz, of Eylau, Friedland, Jena, Wagram, and Borodino melted upon the air. Then the Duke galloped off with a single officer to order the advance. The smoke thinned for an instant ; and a trim, bare-headed figure was seen pointing a cocked-hat towards the French. Some one inquired (a shade superfluously) which way to go ; and the Duke's voice answered him, " Right ahead, to be sure."

Late that night Blücher met him in the road on

horseback and clasped a weary Duke, exclaiming "*Mein lieber Kamerad*," and exhausting his entire stock of French by adding a trifle inadequately, "*Quelle affaire.*" For the Emperor had shattered his last army in blind attacks upon the ridge, and then crushed it between Wellington and the Prussians. A lonely, white-faced man, he stood in the moonlight waiting in a little wood, waiting for troops that never came : his cheeks were wet with tears. Far to the south the Prussian cavalry were sabring the last remnant of the *Grande Armée* under the moon. . . . "No more firing was heard at Brussels—the pursuit rolled miles away. Darkness came down on the field and city ; and Amelia was praying for George, who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart."

. . . . . .

The Duke rode slowly back to Waterloo. There was no feeling of elation, and they were all exhausted. Besides, he had a solemn notion that, where so many had fallen close to him, he had somehow been preserved by Providence. "The finger of Providence was upon me," he wrote that night, "and I escaped unhurt" ; and he repeated almost the same words in Paris later. Then they sat down to supper ; the table had been laid for the usual number, but the Staff had suffered cruelly, and there were so many empty places. The Duke, who ate very little, kept looking at the door ; and Alava knew that he was watching for the absent faces. When the meal was over, he left them.

But as he rose, he lifted both hands saying, " The hand of God has been over me this day." Then he went out and began to write his dispatch :

> " My Lord,
>
> " Buonaparte having collected the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 6th corps of the French army, and the Imperial Guards . . ."

He asked them to bring in the casualty returns, and slept for a few hours. When he read them by the first morning light, he broke down. Picton, Ponsonby, De Lancey, Barnes, Gordon, Elley . . . it had been worse than Badajoz. Then he took his tea and toast, finished his dispatch, and rode sadly into Brussels. He saw Creevey from his hotel window and waved a signal to come in. He was quite solemn still, and said that it had been a damned serious business—a damned nice thing—the nearest run thing you ever saw in your life. His mind ran on the losses, and he added grimly that Blücher got so damnably licked on Friday night that he could not find him on Saturday morning, and was obliged to fall back to keep in touch with him. Then he walked up and down the room and praised his men. Creevey inquired if the French had fought better than usual.

" No," said the Duke, " they have always fought the same since I first saw them at Vimeiro. By God ! I don't think it would have been done if I had not been there." *The Duke.* 1931.

VI

ANDRÉ MAUROIS

DISRAELI'S FIRST SPEECH

[In 1837 Benjamin Disraeli, after a chequered career as fashionable novelist and Radical politician, entered Parliament as a Tory. The Whigs were in office, Lord Melbourne was Prime Minister, Lord John Russell Leader of the Opposition, Lord Palmerston Foreign Secretary, Sir John Campbell Attorney-General. The Opposition leaders included Sir Robert Peel, Lord Stanley, and Lord Lyndhurst. The Irish party, which supported the Government, were led by O'Connell. Other names mentioned are Bulwer Lytton, the author; Mr. and Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, friends of Disraeli—Mrs. Lewis married him on her husband's death; and Sarah Disraeli, Benjamin's sister. Bradenham was their family home.]

At Bradenham it was possible to believe that all England was agog with the entrance of Benjamin Disraeli to Parliament. In London conversation centred rather on the young Queen, her ease of bearing, her intelligence, the affection which she seemed to feel for her Prime Minister, Melbourne.

Many people, too, coming back from holidays, were talking of their first railway journey; they had experienced a certain sense of danger, but soon put it out of their heads.

Immediately Disraeli found his Wyndham Lewis "colleagues" again. Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, proud of her protégé, took him to the theatre to see Kean, in a well-heated box. He went to receive Lord Lyndhurst's congratulations, and to compliment him on his return, for this sturdy old man had just married a young girl and his sole topic was of having a son. Then Wyndham Lewis showed him the Houses of Parliament.

As the old Palace of Westminster had been partly burnt down, the Lords and Commons were sitting in temporary halls. There they were rather crowded, but Disraeli managed to make sure of a seat for himself just behind his chief, Sir Robert Peel. The latter was cordial and invited the new member to join him at a small dinner-party at the Carlton on the following Thursday. "A House of Commons dinner purely. By that time we shall know something of the temper of the House." That "we" was very acceptable. Wyndham Lewis, when he came home, said to his wife: "Peel took Disraeli by the hand in the most cordial fashion."

From the first divisions it was plain that Lord Melbourne's Whig Ministry, with the support of the Irish, was going to retain power. For a fortnight Disraeli remained a silent spectator of the

debates. He had a great desire to speak, but was terribly intimidated. He saw himself set about with great men. Opposite him, on the Ministerial bench, in front of the official red box, was the Whig leader, Lord John Russell, very small in his black frock-coat of old-fashioned cut, his face half hidden beneath a hat with an enormous brim, and with a stricken air, Lord John, the perfect symbol of his party, who advanced the most daring ideas in the most archaic style, and uttered the word "democracy" with an aristocratic drawl. Near him was Lord Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary, with his dyed and carefully brushed side-whiskers, Palmerston of whom Granville said that he looked like some old retired croupier from Baden, and whom the Whigs deemed vulgar, because he had not that ceremonious respect for the Crown which the Whigs had always shown, even when they were dethroning kings. Nearer to him, standing out against the massive table which separated the Ministers from the Opposition, Disraeli could see from behind the imposing figure of Sir Robert Peel, and in profile, the brilliant Lord Stanley, with his fine curved nose, his sensitive mouth, his curled and slightly unruly hair; Stanley the indolent, the disdainful, the intelligent, dressed with a carefully considered negligence that was full of lessons for Dizzy. Over by the entrance, amongst the Radicals, was his friend Bulwer; and in the midst of the Irish band, his formidable foe, Daniel O'Connell.

He was troubled also by the contrast in this assembly between the majesty of its ritual and its carelessness for appearances. Nobody listened; members chattered during the speeches and moved endlessly in and out; but the Speaker was in robes and wig, the ushers brought in and removed the mace, and a fellow-member was referred to only by the appellation of "the honourable gentleman." All these small details delighted a neophyte who had so long observed them from without. He was certain that on the day when he would rise to speak, he would commit no blunder, would address himself solely to the Speaker, following the accepted fiction of the place, would call every barrister-member "the honourable and learned gentleman," every officer-member "the honourable and gallant gentleman," Sir Robert Peel "the right honourable baronet," and Lord John "the noble Lord opposite." Already in his thoughts his phrases were cast in the parliamentary mould. If he became a Minister, how grandly he would strike his fist on that scarlet box! At the close of a loudly acclaimed speech, with what an air of negligence would he drop into his seat on the Treasury bench, wiping his lips with handkerchief of fine cambric! But now that he had measured at closer quarters the powerful inertia of this great body, a certain anxiety was mingled with his impatience.

. . . . . .

In establishing the powers of the House, a dis-

cussion had opened on a subscription opened by a Mr. Spottiswoode to furnish Protestant candidates with the funds necessary to fight the Catholics in Ireland. This subscription had been extremely distasteful, not only to the Irish, but also to the Liberals, who held it to be contrary to the liberty of the electors. O'Connell had just spoken on the subject with vehemence when Disraeli rose in his place. It had been arranged that Lord Stanley should reply on behalf of the Conservatives, but Disraeli had gone up and asked for his place as spokesman, and Stanley, surprised but indifferent, had granted it.

Irish and Liberals both looked with curiosity at the new orator who now rose opposite them. Many of them had heard it said that he was a charlatan, an old Radical turned Conservative, a novel-writer, a pompous orator. It was known that he had had a violent quarrel with O'Connell, and a strong detachment of the latter's friends had grouped together as soon as Disraeli rose. On the Conservative benches the country gentlemen examined with some disquietude this decidedly un-English face. The curls vexed them, and the costume. Disraeli wore a bottle-green coat, a white waistcoat covered with gold chains ("Why so many chains, Dizzy?" Bulwer had said to him. "Are you practising to become Lord Mayor, or what?"), and a great black cravat accentuated the pallor of his complexion. It was a grave moment, and he was playing a great part. He had to show

to the Liberals what manner of man they had lost in him, to the Conservatives that a future leader was in their midst, to O'Connell that the day of expiation was at hand. He had several reasons for confidence : his speech had been elaborately prepared, and contained several phrases of sure effectiveness ; and the tradition of Parliament was such that these beginners' speeches were greeted with kindliness. " The best maiden speech since Pitt's " was the remark generally passed to the orator. Young Gladstone, for example, whom Disraeli now found again on the benches of the Commons, had delivered his five years before amid general sympathy : " Spoke my first time for fifty minutes," he had noted in his diary. " The House heard me very kindly and my friends were satisfied. Tea afterwards at the Carlton." But Gladstone came from Eton and Oxford ; he had a handsome English face, with firm and familiar features, dark-coloured clothes, and a grave manner.

Disraeli's voice was a trifle forced : its effect, one of unpleasing astonishment. Disraeli tried to show that the Irish, and O'Connell in particular, had themselves profited by very similar subscriptions. " This majestic mendicancy . . ." he said. The House had a horror of long words, and there was a titter of laughter. " I do not affect to be insensible to the difficulty of my position. (*Renewed laughter.*) I am sure I shall receive the indulgence of honourable gentlemen—(*laughter and ' Question ! '*) ; but I can assure them that if

they do not wish to hear me, I, without a murmur, will sit down. (*Applause and laughter.*)" After a moment of comparative calm another slightly startling association of words roused the storm. From the Irish group came hisses, scraping of feet, and catcalls. Disraeli kept calm. "I wish I really could induce the House to give me five minutes more. (*Roars of laughter.*) I stand here to-night, sir, not formally, but in some degree virtually, the representative of a considerable number of members of Parliament. (*Loud and general laughter.*) Now, why smile? (*Continued laughter.*) Why envy me? (*Loud laughter.*) Why should I not have a tale to unfold to-night? (*Roars of laughter.*)"

From that moment onwards the uproar became such that only a few phrases could be heard.

"About that time, sir, when the bell of our cathedral announced the death of the monarch—('*Oh, oh!*' *and much laughter.*) . . . If honourable members think it is fair to interrupt me, I will submit. (*Great laughter.*) I would not act so towards any one, that is all I can say. (*Laughter and cries of* '*Go on!*') But I beg simply to ask—('*Oh!*' *and loud laughter.*) Nothing is so easy as to laugh. (*Roars of laughter.*) We remember the amatory eclogue—(*Roars of laughter*)—the old loves and the new loves that took place between the noble Lord, the Tityrus of the Treasury Bench, and the learned Daphne of Liskeard—(*Loud laughter and* '*Question!*'). . . . When we remember at the same time that with emancipated

Ireland and enslaved England, on the one hand a triumphant nation, on the other a groaning people, and notwithstanding the noble Lord, secure on the pedestal of power, may wield in one hand the keys of St. Peter, and—(*Here the hon. Member was interrupted with such loud and incessant laughter that it was impossible to know whether he closed his sentence or not.*) Now, Mr. Speaker, we see the philosophical prejudices of man. (*Laughter and cheers.*) I respect cheers, even when they come from the lips of political opponents. (*Renewed laughter.*) I think, sir—(' *Hear, hear !* ' *and* ' *Question, question* ! ') —I am not at all surprised, sir, at the reception I have received. (*Continued laughter.*) I have begun several things many times—(*Laughter*)—and I have often succeeded at last—(*Fresh cries of* ' *Question !* ') —although many had predicted that I must fail, as they had done before me. (' *Question, question !* ') "

And then, in formidable tones, staring indignantly at his interrupters, raising his hands and opening his mouth as wide as he could, he cried out in a voice which was almost terrifying and suddenly dominated the clamour : " Ay, sir, and though I sit down now, the time will come when you will hear me."

He was silent. His adversaries were still laughing ; his friends gazed at him, saddened and surprised. During the whole of his ordeal one man had supported him with great firmness—the right honourable baronet, Sir Robert Peel. Sir Robert was not in the habit of showing noisy approval of

the orators of his party ; he listened to them in an almost hostile silence. But on this occasion he turned round several times to the young orator, saying " Hear, hear ! " in a loud voice. When he turned towards the Chamber he could not contain a slight smile.

Lord Stanley had risen, and scornfully, without saying one single word on the incredible reception of which one of his colleagues had just been the victim, had resumed the question seriously. He was listened to with respect. Silent and sombre, Disraeli leaned his head on his hand. Once again a defeat, once again hell. Never, since he had followed the debates of the Commons, had he known of so degrading a scene. Was the life of the Cogan school going to begin again for him now in Parliament ? Would he still have to fight and hate, when he desired so much to love and be loved ? Why was everything more difficult for him than for others ? But why, in his first speech, had he challenged O'Connell and his band ? It would be hard now to swim against the stream. Would it even be possible at all ? He had lost all standing in the eyes of this assembly. He reflected with bitterness on the idea he had conjured up of this début. He had imagined a house overwhelmed by his phrases, charmed by his images, delighted by his sarcasms ; prolonged applause ; a complete and immediate success. . . . And these insulting guffaws. . . . Defeat. . . . O for the haven of the Bradenham woods !

A division forced him to rise. He had not heard the debate. The excellent Lord Chandos came up to him with congratulations. He replied that there was no cause here for congratulations, and murmured : " It is a reverse. . . ." " No such thing ! " said Chandos, " you are quite wrong. I have just seen Peel, and I asked him, ' Now tell me exactly what you think of Disraeli.' Peel replied, ' Some of my party were disappointed and talk of failure. I say *just the reverse*. He did all that he could do under the circumstances. I say anything but failure ; he must make his way.' "

In the lobby the Liberal Attorney-General stopped him and asked with cordiality : " Now, Mr. Disraeli, can you tell me how you finished one sentence in your speech—we are anxious to know : ' In one hand the keys of St. Peter, and in the other——' ? "

" ' In the other the cap of liberty,' Sir John."

The other smiled and said : " A good picture ! "

" Yes," replied Disraeli with a touch of bitterness, " but your friends will not allow me to finish my pictures."

" But I assure you," said the Attorney-General, " there was the liveliest desire to hear you from us. It was a party at the bar, over whom we have no control ; but you have nothing to be afraid of."

What was this ? On others, then, the impression of an irreparable collapse had not been so unmistakable as on himself ? Like many highly-strung men, Disraeli picked up confidence again as quickly

as he lost heart. Already the cloud of despair was lifting. Writing to Sarah on the following day, he circumscribed the extent of the disaster : " As I wish to give you an *exact* idea of what occurred, I state at once that my début was a *failure*, so far that I could not succeed in gaining an opportunity of saying what I intended ; but the failure was not occasioned by my breaking down or any incompetency on my part, but from the physical powers of my adversaries. I can give you no idea how bitter, how factious, how unfair they were. I fought through all with undaunted pluck and unruffled temper, made occasionally good isolated hits when there was silence, and finished with spirit when I found a formal display was ineffectual." He signed it : " Yours, D.—in very good spirits."

On the same day, entering the Athenæum, Bulwer saw old Sheil, the famous Irish member and O'Connell's lieutenant, surrounded by a group of young Radicals, who were rejoicing in the Disraeli incident. Bulwer went over to them and remained silent. Suddenly Sheil threw down his newspaper and said in his shrill voice : " Now, gentlemen, I have heard all you have to say, and, what is more, I heard this same speech of Mr. Disraeli, and I tell you this : if ever the spirit of oratory was in a man, it is in that man. Nothing can prevent him from being one of the first speakers in the House of Commons. Ay ! I know something about that place, I think, and I tell you what besides : that if there had not been this inter-

ruption, Mr. Disraeli might have been a failure ; I don't call this a failure, it is a crash. My début was a failure, because I was heard, but my reception was supercilious, his indignant. A début should be dull. The House will not allow a man to be a wit and an orator, unless they have the credit of finding it out. There it is."

This little oration, coming from an opponent, left a shock of astonishment. The young men dispersed, rather embarrassed. Bulwer went up to Sheil and said : " Disraeli is dining with me this evening. Would you like to meet him ? "

" In spite of my gout," said Sheil, " I long to know him. I long to tell him what I think."

Sheil was charming at dinner. He took Disraeli aside and explained to him that this noisy reception had been a great opportunity for him. " For," said he, " if you had been listened to, what would have been the result ? You would have done what I did ; you would have made the best speech that you ever would have made : it would have been received frigidly, and you would have despaired of yourself. I did. As it is, you have shown to the House that you have a fine organ, an unlimited command of language, courage, temper, and readiness. Now get rid of your genius for a session. Speak often, for you must not show yourself cowed, but speak shortly. Be very quiet, try to be dull, only argue and reason imperfectly, for if you reason with precision they will think you are trying to be witty. Astonish them by

speaking on subjects of detail. Quote figures, dates, calculations. And in a short time the House will sigh for the wit and eloquence which they all know are in you. They will encourage you to pour them forth, and then you will have the ear of the House and be a favourite."

A speech so intelligent, and showing so deep an understanding of the English, flooded the future with light for Disraeli. Nobody was more capable than he of understanding and following such counsel. He liked to fashion himself with his own hands like a work of art. He was always ready to touch up the picture. Once more he had fallen into the mistake wherewith his father had so often reproached him, that of being in a hurry, of wanting to be famous at one stroke. But he would know how to advance slowly.

A week later he rose in the midst of a discussion on copyright. Almost every one was inclined to give him a favourable welcome. Tories and Liberals were of one mind, that this man had been unfairly treated. That was distasteful to them. They were sportsmen; they preferred that an orator, like the game, should have his chance. A sense of shame lingered in their minds from that brutal afternoon. They were inclined to support this odd young man if he dared to make another trial. They would even put up with the excessive brilliance of his phrases and with his unheard-of images. But to the general surprise, he uttered nothing but what was commonplace and obvious,

on a subject with which he was thoroughly familiar, and sat down amid general approval. The author of the project replied that he would carefully bear in mind the excellent remarks of the honourable member for Maidstone, himself one of the most remarkable ornaments of modern literature. Sir Robert Peel was strong in his approval, "Hear, hear!" and many members went up and congratulated Disraeli. An old Tory colonel came up to him and said, after some amiable growling: "Well, you have got in your saddle again; now you may ride away." To Sarah he wrote: "Next time I rise in the House, I shall sit down amidst loud cheers."

Far from having been of disservice to him, this sorry beginning had given him the prestige of a victim. Within three weeks he had acquired, in this extremely difficult assembly, a kind of popularity. He was courageous; he spoke well; he seemed to have an exact knowledge of the subjects he dealt with. "Why not?" thought the English gentlemen.

Disraeli. 1927.

VII

DAVID CECIL

A PROPHET OF THE EVANGELICALS

[This extract describes the character and early years of John Newton, a leader of the Evangelical movement of the eighteenth century. He afterwards became celebrated as the spiritual director of the poet Cowper.]

JOHN NEWTON was born in London in 1725, the son of a shipmaster. Even as a child he showed himself possessed of a superstitious, inflammable imagination, and a boiling, dynamic energy, always restlessly searching for an object on which to expend itself. His mother, an old-fashioned Puritan, wished him to become a clergyman, and for the first few years of his life his mind was forced to concentrate itself on religion. From time to time he would be seized with a fit of violent devotion. Once, at the age of fifteen, he was so excited by Beattie's *Church History* that for three months he would not eat any meat, and hardly opened his mouth, for fear of letting fall one of those idle words for which he would have to give account on

the Last Day. However, his mother died. And with adolescence his virile nature began to react against the ideas to which he had been brought up. He was incapable of doing anything by halves; and he became a militant atheist. His father had sent him to sea; he threw himself with gusto into the rioting, buccaneering life of the eighteenth-century sailor, and especially took a fierce delight in blaspheming against the God he had so lately scrupulously honoured. From time to time, indeed, the convictions of his childhood would reassert themselves, and visit him in mysterious stirrings of conscience. Once, for example, he had a curious dream. It seemed to him that his ship was riding at anchor for the night in the harbour of Venice, where he had lately touched: the exquisite, worthless Venice of Longhi and Goldoni, a strange setting for the sombre fantasies of his Nordic imagination. It was his watch on deck, and as he stood gazing across the inky waters of the lagoon to where, on the lighted piazzetta, contessa and cisisbeo stepped masked from their gondolas to revel at the Ridotto, a stranger came up to him and gave him a ring, which he implored him not to lose, as he valued his life. This stranger was followed by another, who as eloquently adjured him to throw the ring away. And he dropped it overboard. Immediately the spires of Venice were lit up with a lurid glare; behind them the Euganean hills burst into flame; and his tempter, turning on him with an expression of triumph,

told him that they were lit for his destruction. But at this moment a third stranger appeared. As he stepped on board the flames died away ; and he drew the ring from the water, but would not give it back to Newton, saying, with a solemn emphasis, that he should have it at some future time. Shuddering with terror he awoke. The dream seemed to him a parable of his own spiritual life : the ring his salvation, the second stranger the power of evil. He could not get the dream out of his head.

However, it could not for long divert his mind from following its natural course. Already, indeed, it was dominated by a very different theme. His turbulent spirit found it hard to settle to any job, and about a year before he had got a new appointment on a ship bound for Jamaica. A few days before it sailed he went to pay a visit of courtesy on some people called Catlett, to whom his father had given him an introduction. He had hardly been in the house an hour before he had fallen in love with Miss Catlett—a girl of fourteen. His love was of a piece with his religion and his infidelity—a flaming, tearing, devouring passion that burned itself into the very marrow of his being. For the moment time ceased to exist. His ship was due to sail in a few days ; and he let it sail, while he sat day after day with his eyes fixed, as in a trance, on the object of his adoration. And when at last he did go to sea, it was only to dream of Miss Catlett, and work with frenzied energy in order to make enough money to marry her. But now

a succession of disasters began to overtake him. Recklessly lounging on Harwich Dock in his sailor's check shirt, he was caught by the press-gang. His vitality enabled him to support his new condition with tolerable ease and cheerfulness. He soon became a midshipman, and he met a fellow-officer who supplied him with many useful new arguments against the existence of God. But when his ship was ordered to New Guinea and he was faced with the prospect of not seeing Miss Catlett for five years, he deserted. He was caught, brought back in irons, and, in accordance with the savage penal code of the day, publicly stripped, flogged, and degraded to the position of a common seaman. His rage knew no bounds. It was agony to one of his nature to obey when he had once commanded, and he felt he had lost his love for ever. He used to lie for hours, as the ship made its way through the calm tropical waters, brooding on his wrongs, till he was half mad. Sometimes he would decide to kill himself, sometimes the captain who had misused him, sometimes both. But always before he acted the figure of his love, all the lovelier by contrast with his present circumstances, would start before him ; his heart would be flooded with a softer emotion; and he would stay his hand.

At last, after weary months, he arrived at Madeira, where he got exchanged on to another ship. His new captain was kind to him. But Newton was now so desperate that he became

quite unmanageable, insubordinate to superiors, and given up to every vice. When they reached the Platane Islands on the west coast of Africa, he left the ship and took service with a planter. One would have thought it impossible that he should go through anything much worse than he had already. But he did. His master had a black mistress, who took a violent dislike to Newton. For two years he was treated more harshly than the meanest native slave, underclothed and underfed and overworked. An attack of tropical fever, during which he lay untended on the floor without even water to drink, was the final blow. He became like an animal, dumb and resigned, incapable of thought or emotion, or anything but a blind lust to satisfy the wants of nature. Only, now and again, memories of his early education would stumble into his numbed brain. He had somehow managed to keep a tattered geometry in his pocket through all his adventures, and he would steal out by night, half-naked skeleton as he was, and with its help laboriously trace arcs and triangles on the sand in the brilliant light of the African moon. After a year he got away, and became foreman for another planter in the neighbouring islands of the Bananoes. Here his life was supportable save for an occasional pang of regret for Miss Catlett. Such letters as he had written home had brought no reply. And he had given up all hope of getting back. He began more and more to live like the natives, gradually acquiring their habits and

superstitions, so that he dared not allow himself to sleep once the moon was above the fronded palm trees. However, after two years and a half, a ship arrived from England with a letter from his father asking him to come home. His first instinct was to refuse. But the thought that he might see Miss Catlett again, though he now had little hope of marrying her, caused him to change his mind.

Newton was now very different from the stormy boy who had sailed from Torbay five years before. His conversation was still reckless and bitter and profane; so much so, indeed, that the horrified captain of the ship on which he travelled home began to fear it would bring a judgment on the ship. But the suffering Newton had undergone had left him with a disgust for the world. Its prizes no longer inspired his ambition, nor its pleasures his desires. Had he not followed the call of his passions wherever they had led him? And what had he got from them but bitterness and misery? But he could not resign himself to inactivity. His dynamic energy still boiled within him, seeking an outlet. He could not find it in worldly ambition or worldly enjoyment. Was there nothing more stable, more satisfying? Insensibly his mind began to revert for guidance to the beliefs implanted in it in infancy. A moment of danger brought it to the point of decision. Soon after the ship had left Newfoundland a violent storm got up, and within a few hours the upper timbers of the ship were torn away, and it

was flooded with water. Provisions, cargo, and some men were lost, and during two days everybody worked at the pumps. For a time they seemed to be doing no good. With a thrill of fear Newton realized he was probably going to die. "If this will not do," he exclaimed unthinkingly, "the Lord have mercy on us." The true significance of his words suddenly came home to him. He thought, "If He really exists there will be very little mercy for me." In that moment of terrible crisis the whole of his past life moved in vivid review before him, and it struck him with overwhelming force that of all the objects that had in turn commanded his allegiance, now, at the point of death, only the religion of his childhood retained any value in his eyes. It alone had not proved worthless or unattainable: all his sorrows might be dated from the time that he deserted it. He resolved if he were saved to devote the rest of his life to it. He was saved, and for the last few days of the voyage he began to put his resolution into practice. He could not, indeed, feel a lively faith in Christianity; but he was convinced that such a faith alone had the slightest chance of giving him permanent happiness. And he hoped that, by consistently living in accordance with Christian precept, he might obtain it.

He arrived in England to find his father away on a voyage. But he had made arrangements with a shipowner friend of his to offer Newton a job first as mate, and then as captain, on a line of ships

trading in slaves ; so that his future was assured. More pleasing still, he found Miss Catlett still unmarried and still constant. And after his second voyage they were married. In the excitement induced by all these events he tended to forget his pious resolutions, though he still meant to keep them. But on one of his expeditions he saw a young man, an infidel just as he had been, dying in terrible circumstances, friendless in Africa. The fear of death and the terrors of his conscience revived again. A dangerous illness at sea a few months after this finally awakened him from his inertia ; and from this time on he entered on a life of rigid study and devotion. Every moment of his day was devoted to some useful employment, and such time as he could spare from his profession and his religion he occupied in teaching himself Latin from a pocket Horace. It must have been a curious scene—the ship moving with sails and rigging aslant against the stars, among the mysterious islands of that equatorial ocean, while the human cargo packed together in the hold sweltered below, and above, the captain paced the deck murmuring to himself the compact urbanities of Horace.

He persevered in this life for five or six years, but without achieving real satisfaction. The fact was that eighteenth-century orthodoxy did not appeal to his imagination, and so could not become that soul-absorbing passion that to his temperament was a necessary condition of happiness. His present religion regulated his life and saved him from the

worst sufferings into which he had been led by his infidelity. But what he wanted was a doctrine that would demand the absolute surrender of every energy of his mind and body. One evening in 1754 when his ship was at anchor in the port of St. Christopher he came across a Captain Clunie, who told him about Evangelicalism. Before the evening was out Newton had given himself up to this new creed as he had to his love for Miss Catlett. Here was the religion he wanted—a creed that spoke to the heart, that commanded the undivided allegiance of the whole personality, that fired the imagination and gave scope to the desire for action. It was the turning-point of his life. He had found what he had been looking for ever since he was ten years old. For the remaining forty years of his life every thought, feeling, and action was dedicated, without a faltering, to the faith of his choice. His life on board ship took on the ascetic rigour of a Trappist monastery. Every moment he was not working or sleeping he spent in prayer or reading the Bible, or instructing his crew in religion. His Latin studies were laid aside as useless frivolities. If he had female slaves on board he ate no meat, for fear it might strengthen his flesh to lust after them. After a time he made up his mind to give up his profession ; not, oddly enough, because he thought slavery wrong, but because it was too interesting : it made him think too much about secular subjects. For five years he was a tide surveyor at Liverpool, where he

continued his religious studies, and where he managed to get to know Whitefield and Wesley and other Evangelical leaders. Then in 1758 he decided to take orders. But here was a difficulty. He was not at all the sort of man who appealed to a Georgian bishop. Not only was he enthusiastic, and not quite a gentleman, but it was rumoured that he thought a Nonconformist had as good a chance of heaven as a member of the Established Church of England. Every bishop he asked refused to ordain him. Irritated at the rebuffs he received, Newton had thoughts of becoming a Congregationalist minister. But Lord Dartmouth, the good angel of Evangelicalism, stepped in, procured his ordination, and himself presented him to the living of Olney. Conversion had given Newton incentive, ordination gave him scope. All that virile vitality that had carried him triumphant through so many changes of fortune, that had enabled him to endure slavery, defeat sickness, and defy the Navy of England, now poured itself with irresistible force into the avocations of an Evangelical minister. He preached, taught, visited, held prayer meetings; he wrote hymns and pamphlets; even began a history of the whole world since the Creation, from the Evangelical point of view, in order to combat the subversive interpretations of Gibbon and Hume. But his most characteristic activity was his religious letters. All over England, with people of every sort—soldiers, politicians, schoolmasters, young

ladies—Newton kept up a voluminous correspondence, in which he advised them about every detail of their moral and spiritual lives. His advice was always long and generally impassioned ; and when, as sometimes happened, it was given unasked, it was not well received. But on the converted it made a tremendous impression. And by the time he met Cowper, Olney was already one of the centres of the Evangelical world.

His character is sufficiently shown forth by his story. He was primarily a man of action. If he thought he should do a thing he did it ; and he often did it without thinking about it at all. Nor did thought mean anything to him except in so far as it told him how to act. He was incapable of speculation or self-analysis. Reason was to him a weapon which he used, not very effectively, to confute his opponents. His own acts and opinion were directed not by reason, but by unanalysed instinct. He became an atheist because his instinct reacted against religion, and when instinct demanded religion again he threw his atheism overboard without even bothering to find replies to those arguments he had thought so formidable when his instinct had been on their side.

Yet he was not at all stupid. No one whose brain was not a strong instrument could have taught himself Latin on a ship with nothing to help him but a copy of Horace, and anything he took up, whether navigating or preaching or writing, he did well. But over and above all this, he had

imagination. It is this quality that differentiates his narrative from those truthful fictions of Defoe which it so much resembles in its outward incidents —adventures, escapes, and sudden vicissitudes. No one could be less like the business-like heroes of Defoe, with their matter-of-fact love affairs, their unshakeable nerve, and the British common sense with which they confronted the most unlikely situations, than this passionate, superstitious creature who was guided in the most momentous decisions by omens and prophetic dreams ; who trembled before the baleful influence of the African moon ; and was upheld through the blackest misfortunes, and prevented from committing appalling crimes, by the memory of a girl of sixteen whom he was convinced he would never see again. He was extraordinarily sensitive to the influence of Nature ; he found in later life that only from country solitudes could his soul soar easily to heights of spiritual ecstasy. His letters, too, crude and absurd as they are, are full of flights of naïve fancy, touches of beauty, humour and intimacy, only possible to a man of imagination.

Nor was this out of keeping with his whole character. The imagination is a thing of instinct rather than of reason, and often men of action have more of it than men of thought. Hobbes had less imagination than Cromwell, Luther more than Erasmus. Newton, indeed, had more in common with these heroes of the Reformation than with his own contemporaries. Like theirs, his char-

acter was heroic and unsymmetrical, freaked with a Gothic quaintness, misted with a Gothic sublimity. He had their faults, too. He was narrow and uncouth; he was not moulded of fine clay. He could hardly have survived such a life if he had been; and in so far as he was not like Luther, he was the eighteenth-century sailor he looked, clumsy, careless, and insensitive. His kindness was generally tactless, and his piety sometimes profane.

But all these qualities, good and bad, remarkable or commonplace, were subservient to the single one of fanaticism. His whole life was a succession of slaveries to successive single ideas. Now he was convinced that his own particular brand of religion was the best thing for any one, anywhere, in any circumstances. His every word, whether serious or cheerful, trivial or important, whether it was connected with people or politics or gardening, was made to refer to religion. His very jokes were evangelical. This exclusive devotion was bound up with the strongest sides of his character—his will, his passion, his imagination, his faith. He would have given his life for his beliefs, without a thought. But exclusiveness is also responsible for his defects. He carried out the precepts of his creed so literally as to be at times both indecent and ridiculous. "Good news indeed," he remarked, with conscientious joviality, on hearing of his favourite niece's translation to another world. It might sound heartless, but it was Evangelical, and therefore must be right. Again, whatever could

not be by any means forced into connection with his religion must necessarily be of the devil. "If there is any practice in the land sinful," he exclaimed, "then attendance at the theatre is so." And all he could see in the graceful symbolism of Venice's marriage to the Sea was "a lying, antiquated Popish Bull."

It is difficult to talk long about one subject without becoming boring. And Newton often did. He would have given his life to save your soul; but nothing could persuade him not to thrust his views down your throat. He tended to become arrogant. There was only one God, and John Newton was His prophet. So that though he was always repeating that he was sinful, he never admitted he was wrong. It was impossible to argue with him. If any one asked Newton to explain a contradiction in his argument, he merely looked at him with the dreadful, glassy good-nature of the fanatic, forgave him for his error, and went on with his exhortation.

The Stricken Deer. 1929.

VIII

JOHN BUCHAN

THE KING'S TRIAL

[This account of the trial of Charles I. opens before that event, when the army is in control of London, and, convinced that there is no security for its victory while the king lives, is forcing his execution on the country in the teeth not only of the Royalists but of the moderate Parliamentarians and the Presbyterians. Persons referred to in the text include Fairfax, a leader of the more moderate Parliamentarians; Bradshaw, President of the Commission that tried the king; Ireton, Cromwell's son-in-law and a regicide; and Hugh Peters, a Puritan preacher who actively supported the execution—he was hanged for his share in it at the Restoration.]

On the 19th Charles was brought from Windsor to the palace of St. James's, guarded by troops of horse, and with Hugh Peters prancing in mountebank triumph before his coach. London was in the grip of a black frost and its Christmas had been dismal. Troopers were everywhere, riding in

grim posses, or off duty and sombrely puffing tobacco, vast silent men, lean from the wars. The citizens did not linger in the streets, for none knew his neighbour's mind. Whitehall was full of soldiers, and now and then there was an outbreak and broken heads. St. Paul's, if we are to believe the royalist journalists, was a curious spectacle ; " they have turned it into an ale-house, a barber's shop, a smith's forge, a scullery, and, I blush to think of it, into a bawdy house." Everywhere there was an epidemic of preaching, Hugh Peters and his friends in St. Margaret's and the Whitehall courtyard, while the London ministers, like Marshall and Calamy, from their own pulpits fulminated against the army.

Meantime the great hall of Westminster had been set in order for the trial. That hall remains to-day though all its environs have suffered change, and it is easy to reconstruct the scene. The booths of the tradespeople were cleared from the floor, and the south end, where the courts of Chancery and King's Bench usually sat, was filled with a wooden platform, divided from the rest of the hall by a partition three feet high. Beneath it was a broad gangway, and another ran at right angles down to the main door, and both gangways were to be lined with pikemen and musketeers. The spectators were to be crowded in the space between the gangways and the walls, but there were also two little galleries above the dais itself. The judges were to sit on benches covered with scarlet

cloth at the back of the dais under the great south window. In the middle of the front row was a raised desk for the president; the clerks sat at a table beneath him, where lay the mace and the sword of state; at the edge of the dais there were pews for the prosecuting counsel, and a crimson velvet armchair for the king, who would sit with his back to the body of the spectators. On the left of the dais, looking towards the judges, a door led to St. Stephen's Chapel where the Commons met; at the back there was a way through by the Court of Requests to the Painted Chamber, splendid in gilding and frescoes and black-letter Scripture texts, where the court held its private sessions. The windows of the Painted Chamber looked out on the gardens of Sir Robert Cotton's house, where the king was to lodge.

About two o'clock on the 20th Charles was carried to Whitehall in a sedan-chair, and thence by water to Cotton house. The commissioners in the Painted Chamber saw him arrive before they had decided upon the authority on which they should found their case, for they were well aware of its legal flimsiness. A certain Sir Purbeck Temple, a royalist who was planning the king's escape, was hidden behind the arras, and at the trial of the regicides deposed as follows:

> When their prayer was over there came news that the King was landing at Sir Robert Cotton's Stairs, at which Cromwell ran to a

> window, looking on the King as he came up the garden. He turned as white as the wall. Returning to the board . . . he said thus: "My masters, he is come, he is come, and now we are doing that great work that the whole nation will be full of. Therefore I desire you to let us resolve here what answer we shall give the King when he comes before us, for the first question that he will ask will be by what authority as commissioners we do try him." To which none answered presently. Then after a little space Henry Marten rose up and said: "In the name of the Commons in Parliament assembled, and all the good people of England."

We may discredit certain details, such as Oliver's white face, but there is no reason to disbelieve the substance of the tale. Headed by Bradshawe in his shot-proof hat, the court, having got its formula, marched with its men-at-arms and ushers into Westminster Hall.

Charles, in a dark suit and wearing the insignia of the Garter, remained covered and paid no respect to the court. When the roll of judges was called sixty-eight responded; when Fairfax's name was spoken Lady Fairfax, in one of the galleries, called out that he had too much wit to be there. While the charge was read the king's stern face relaxed, and he laughed when he heard himself proclaimed a traitor. He tried to interrupt

the clerk by touching him with his cane; its silver head fell off, and he had to pick it up himself. Bradshawe called on him to answer, using Henry Marten's new-made formula. Again there was an interruption, a woman's voice crying out that it was a lie, that not a half nor a quarter of the people of England was with them, and that the charge was made by rebels and traitors. There was a delay while the gallery was cleared, and then Charles asked the expected question—by what authority he was being tried. England, he said, had never been an elective kingdom; he was monarch not by election but by inheritance, and to acknowledge a usurped authority would be a betrayal of his trust. As he was removed the soldiers, by order, shouted "Justice," but the mass of the spectators cried "God save the King."

He was next brought before the court on the 22nd, and again refused to plead. His objection was unanswerable by those who tried to give a colour of legality to what was an act of revolutionary stagecraft. "It is not my case alone, it is the freedom and liberty of the people of England, and, do you pretend what you will, I stand more for their liberties. For if power without law may make law, may alter the fundamental laws of the kingdom, I do not know what subject he is in England can be assured of his life or anything he can call his own." So completely did the court fail to overawe the prisoner that Hewson, one of the commanders of the guards, is said to have lost

his temper and spat in Charles's face. "God hath justice in store," said the king gently, "both for you and me." Again on the 23rd he was before the court with the same result. The commissioners accordingly sat in private in the Painted Chamber, and heard condemnatory evidence in the absence of the prisoner—how he had been seen in arms against the Parliament, and invited foreign armies to enter England. All this was farcical, but time was needed to convince doubting members of the court. On the 25th it was resolved in a small house that they should proceed to sentence against the king as tyrant, traitor, murderer, and public enemy to the commonwealth of England, and that the sentence should be death; and a fuller court next day confirmed the decision. The king was to be brought into Westminster Hall on the morrow to hear his doom.

That day, Saturday the 27th, saw the end of the judicial travesty. That morning Bradshawe's wife implored her husband to spare the king, and was told that he would do him no harm save what the Lord commanded. Bradshawe believed sincerely that he had a good legal case, and, when four years later the rump of the Commons was turned out on the ground that it was no Parliament but an oligarchy, he is said to have lamented, "If this be no Parliament, then am I the king's murderer?" When he took his seat in a scarlet gown that afternoon in Westminster Hall, there was further interruption by women. Charles demanded that he

should be heard in his defence by the Lords and Commons, since he had something to say "most material for the peace of the kingdom." What that something was we cannot tell, but it may be that he meant to offer to abdicate in favour of his son on certain terms. One of the commissioners, John Downes, was inclined to agree to the proposal, but the rest of the court refused. Bradshawe delivered a vast rambling speech, in which he quoted the Scriptures and the classics, mediæval lawyers like Bracton, Mariana, Father Parsons, and George Buchanan, and made but a poor job of it. Charles asked permission to answer him, but was told that it was too late. The clerk read the sentence, and the prisoner, still struggling to speak, was removed by the guards. The soldiers in the hall and outside it, pursuant to orders, shouted "Justice!" and "Execution!" and blew tobacco smoke in his face. "Poor souls," said the king, "for sixpence they would do the same for their commanders." But in the streets the common people were weeping.

As the news of the verdict flew abroad, and the first trestles were set up outside the Banqueting House in Whitehall, a silence of horror fell upon the city. The death-sentence was not the work of the people of England; it was carried through by a small, resolute and armed minority in the face of a stupefied nation. Visionaries besieged the council of officers with commands from Heaven for Charles's safety. All that was most stable in the

land, all who were reverent of old sanctities and "fearful for the laws," were shocked to the core not only by the barbarity of the deed but by its futility. Many pointed out—not quite truly—that England's true grievance was not against the king's person but against "the power that is made up in the kingly office by the corrupt constitution"; the sword could end Charles's life, but not the monarchy. Staunch reformers and tried servants of Parliament went into opposition. Fairfax was one; he did his best in his slow way to save the king's life, and, like Montrose, he wrote verses of passionate regret to his memory. Vane was another, and he had gone to extreme lengths in his anti-monarchist fervour. Lawyers like St. John and Pierrepont were naturally hostile, and young Algernon Sidney put the thing squarely to the judges—"first, the king can be tried by no court; second, no man can be tried by this court." The Presbyterians were scandalized and enraged; the Scottish commissioners in London made vigorous protests; the Assembly of Divines pled for a respite, as did the London clergy. The gentility, the reason, the moderation, the wealth of England were flung into one scale.

Fruitlessly, for in the other was the sword. A knot of determined men, who see their course with the terrible simplicity of the fanatic, and have armed forces to do their bidding, are more than a match for a million puzzled civilians. They were so deeply in earnest that they made a sacrament out

of their vengeance. "The gentlemen that were appointed his judges," Lucy Hutchinson wrote, "and divers others, saw in the King a disposition so bent on the ruin of all that opposed him, and of all the righteous and just things they had contended for, that it was upon the conscience of many of them that, if they did not execute justice upon him, God would require at their hands all the blood and desolation which should ensue by their suffering him to escape, when God had brought him into their hands." Against such assurance there could be no argument, for it had the compelling power of a mandate from Heaven. The logic of events had convinced both Ireton and Oliver, but they saw it not as a conclusion of cold reason, but as a flash of divine revelation.

But Oliver, unlike his colleagues, had the plain good sense of the countryman and a mind ruled more by instinct than by syllogisms. He had reached his decision by crushing down his practical wisdom and closing his eyes to ultimate consequences. He had no doubts, but the consciousness that his certainty had been won by doing violence to other sides of his nature left him in a strained, neurotic temper. He argued his case fiercely to Fairfax, to the Scots, to every doubter; his inflexible will coerced the waverers, and it is said that in the signing of the death-warrant he guided some of their pens. The strain of rustic buffoonery in him came out, for on that same grim occasion he inked Henry Marten's face, and

got his own inked in return. It was the natural rebound from his long months of torturing indecision. The man, too, was physically and mentally overstrung ; an indecent nervous hilarity was the proof of his new-won confidence, and he dismissed with horse-play or with a horse-laugh the scruples of the timid. " I tell you," he boasted to Algernon Sidney, " we will cut off his head with the crown upon it."

Oliver Cromwell. 1934.

IX

ARTHUR BRYANT

OAK-APPLE DAY

[This extract explains itself. It is an account of Charles II.'s escape after his defeat at the Battle of Worcester.]

As the last streaks of daylight, September 3, 1651, fell on the Worcestershire landscape, a tall dark fugitive drew in his horse on a lonely heath. About him clustered some sixty lords and officers, whose looks told a tale of peril and defeat.

At that moment the young King of England had touched a lower point than any to which his twenty-one chequered and poverty-stricken years had yet brought him. A few weeks before he had ridden at the head of a Scottish army along the moorland road by Shap Fell, watching, across the unclouded atmosphere of summer, the distant Derbyshire heights beckoning him on to London and a golden crown. Now his gallant gamble had ended in dust. All day he had fought at the head of outnumbered and despairing men as Cromwell's net closed in on Worcester. Only at

evening, as the shattered Scots poured out through St. Martin's Gate, had King Charles, protesting that he would rather die than see the consequences of so fatal a day, been swept by the rout from the doomed city.

At Barbourne Bridge, where the grass highway to the north was crowded with flying men, there had been a hasty consultation. The King himself had wished to ride alone to London, trusting to arrive before news of the battle and so take ship to France. But the day was already waning, and his companions had dissuaded him from this desperate course. Leaving the main line of fugitives to the west, they rode with him across a land of wooded valleys and little hills, until at nightfall they reached Kinver Heath. Here the scout, who was leading, admitted that he was lost.

In the confusion that followed, the Earl of Derby brought forward a Catholic gentleman, Charles Giffard, owner of a remote house in Shropshire, near which he had found shelter a few days before. To Giffard and his servant, Yates, a poor rustic skilful in the ways of that country, the fugitives entrusted themselves. So guided, they came down into the hidden lands below. As complete darkness fell, romance spread her cloak over the King and hid him from the thousand eyes that sought him.

Nobody suspected the little party of Cavaliers, who walked their horses through the streets of sleeping Stourbridge. At an inn near Wordsley

the King stopped for a hasty tankard of ale : then rode on through the night, a crust of bread in one hand and meat in the other. Giffard rode at his side, telling him of the secret hiding-places of Whiteladies and Boscobel, while the broken lords and officers trotted behind. For some hours they followed a maze of winding lanes, till they came to the edge of Brewood Forest. Here, fifty miles from the battlefield, and a little before dawn, the tired King saw the dark outlines of the ruined monastery of Whiteladies.

The clatter of hooves and the whispered calls of Giffard brought down the Penderels, the poor Catholic woodcutters who tenanted the house. To these humble folk the great personages, crowding into the hall, turned for help and advice. While a hasty message was sent to bring William, the eldest of the five Penderel brothers, from Boscobel, the King, in an inner chamber, broke has fast on sack and biscuits. A few minutes later Lord Derby brought in William and Richard Penderel to him, telling them that they must have a care of him and preserve him. To this they proudly and gladly assented. Richard went out to fetch some country clothes, while the King stripped and put on a rough noggen shirt. The first lines of dawn were appearing when Richard returned with an old sweaty leather doublet, a green, threadbare coat, and a greasy steeple hat without band or lining. Lord Wilmot, the stoutest and merriest of the fugitives, began to cut

the royal locks with a knife, but did the job so badly that Richard was commanded to finish it, which he did in great pride with a basin and a pair of shears. Placing his hands up the chimney, Charles, who, despite peril and weariness, could not refrain from laughing, completed his make-up by blacking his face. Then, while his companions rode off to join the flying Scots, he went out into the dawn with Richard Penderel and a bill-hook.

It was raining. All day the King crouched in the damp undergrowth of a little wood, called Spring Coppice. About midday Penderel's sister-in-law, Elizabeth Yates, brought him a blanket to sit on and a mess of milk, butter, and eggs. She told him news of the world outside the woods—of long streams of Scottish fugitives and pursuing Roundheads and of search-parties already at Whiteladies. Afterwards he fell into a broken slumber.

Charles had changed much since Vandyke had painted him amid the silken dresses, the flowing hair, the lace, the pearls, the roses of his father's Court. Before his twelfth year he had seen the lights of Whitehall darken into tragedy, while a blind mob, which cared for none of these things, bawled out for Reform and Liberty. While still a child, he had become a wanderer on the face of the earth. For three years he had followed his ill-fated father: seen the royal standard raised and blown down one tempestuous autumn evening at

Nottingham, seen Rupert's men charge across the Warwickshire plain, and played where gown and sword mingled in Christ Church meadow. Sent at fifteen to preside over the King's ruined fortunes in the west, he had spent a last year of boyhood on English soil, amid the squabbles and debaucheries of a broken army, driven back week by week towards the sunset, until the royal banner floated in solitary loyalty above Pendennis Castle. Thence, on a March night in 1646, he had passed out of England.

He had become King at eighteen—of an estate of broken men and women, dangers, debts, and beggary. Nor had he had anywhere to lay his head, for the rulers of Europe, overawed by the "powerful devils at Westminster," had little wish to shelter him. Then the tempter had appeared in the homely guise of an elder of the Presbyterian Kirk and offered him the Scottish Crown in return for the renunciation of the Anglican cause for which his father had died. After many pitiful evasions, to find bread for himself and his followers, he had taken the Covenant and sailed for Scotland. In the year that followed, he had learnt many things. He had been humiliated and catechized; subjected to an infinity of dull, tedious sermons, made to do penance for the sins of his father and the idolatry of his mother, and threatened with betrayal to his iron foes. Yet by patience and a certain gentle persuasiveness he had at last overthrown the supremacy of Argyll and the Kirk, and

at the eleventh hour rallied a united Scotland behind him. But his triumph had come too late: half the country was in Cromwell's hands, and the sequel had been that bold, desperate march into England. Now an adventure, which had begun in shame, degradation, and the sorrow of honest men, was ending in a little wet wood in a corner of the land he had come to conquer. But it was pleasanter to sleep under a hedge in England than in a palace in Scotland: even the rain and the weariness were better than that.

In the intervals of sleep the King talked to Penderel. He had still hopes of reaching London and there taking ship for France, but his companion knew of no one on that road who could assist him. It was therefore decided that he should make for Wales, where he had many friends, and that Penderel should escort him that night to Madeley, ten miles to the west, where a Catholic gentleman of his acquaintance might secure them a passage across the Severn.

A little before dusk the two left the wood and made their way across a heath to Hobbal Grange, the cottage where Richard lived with his widowed mother. The old peasant came out to welcome her King, blessing God that she had raised up children to succour him in his time of need. She gave him bread, cheese, and a fricassee of bacon and eggs, and wondered to see his appetite, half regal and wholly boyish. While she waited at the table, her son-in-law, Francis Yates—who not long

after was hanged at Oxford for his share in the affair—came in with thirty pieces of silver, his all, which he offered to the King. The latter, who—though he perhaps did not realize the full grandeur of the sacrifice—was not unacquainted with poverty, accepted ten of them in his necessity.

The night was pitch black, and Charles, after two days of continuous action and exposure, was tired out. He and Penderel made their way across country, avoiding the haunts of men and clambering the wet fences and pales of remote enclosures. After a few miles, the trackway they were following dipped down to bridge a stream, beside which stood a mill. The miller, hearing footsteps, appeared at the door, and called on them to stop. Instead of obeying, they ran blindly past him. The lane beyond the river was muddy and steep, and the darkness was such that Charles had nothing to guide him but the rustling of Penderel's breeches ahead and the miller's footsteps behind. When his breath and courage could carry him no longer, he flung himself into the hedge and waited for the end. Here Penderel joined him, and the two lay listening for their pursuer. But all was quiet, and after a time they resumed their journey through the briary, dripping night. Poor Charles was now in despair. His ill-made country shoes so racked his feet that he threw them away and walked in his slashed stockings. His nose began to bleed, his head throbbed, and his limbs trembled with cold and weariness. "Many times he cast

himself upon the ground with a desperate and obstinate resolution to rest there till the morning, that he might shift with less torment, what hazard so ever he ran. But his stout guide still prevailed with him to make a new attempt, sometimes promising him that the way should be better, sometimes assuring him that he had but a little farther to go." Shortly after midnight they came to Madeley.

At the edge of the village Penderel left the King in hiding and made his way to Francis Wolfe's house. The old gentleman—he was sixty-nine, and lived to see the Restoration—came to the door. Penderel asked him if he would help a Royalist fugitive of rank to cross the Severn. Wolfe replied that the town was full of troops, and all the passages across the river guarded, and that he would not undertake so perilous a task for any one but the King himself. But when Penderel blurted out the truth, he expressed his readiness to venture his life and all that he had.

As the priest-holes in the house were known, the Wolfes and their daughter Anne sheltered the King all that day in a hayloft. In the evening they brought him food and money, and new shoes and stockings. Then, as the passage of the Severn was judged impossible, the two travellers started on the return journey for Boscobel. At Evelith Mill, fearing their challenger of the previous night, they left the roadway, intending to ford the river above the bridge. Here Penderel's courage, for the first

and last time, failed him. The heavy rain had swollen the little stream, and, child of the Midlands that he was, he confided that he could not swim and that it was a scurvy river. Thirty years afterwards Charles dictated the story of that passage to Pepys. "So I told him that the river, being but a little one, I would undertake to help him over. Upon which we went over some closes to the river-side, and I, entering the river first, to see whether I could myself go over, who knew how to swim, found it was but a little above my middle, and, thereupon, taking Richard Penderel by the hand, I helped him over." At about three o'clock that morning they passed the gateway of Whiteladies and came into the woods between that place and Boscobel.

Leaving the King in the wood, Penderel went on to Boscobel to consult his brother as to the next step in their desperate enterprise. Here news awaited him. Lord Wilmot had found a refuge at the house of a neighbouring Catholic gentleman, Mr. Whitgreave of Moseley Hall, through the offices of Father Huddleston, a priest, who lived there. The other piece of news was that Colonel Careless, who two days before had led the last charge over the cobblestones of Worcester, was in hiding at Boscobel.

Careless accompanied Penderel back to the wood. He found the King, at the first stroke of dawn, sitting forlorn on a tree-stump, and could not refrain from weeping at the sight. The three then

walked together across the high ground towards Boscobel, looking back, as the sun touched the Wrekin, on the far Welsh mountains beyond the Severn.

At Boscobel, a black and white hunting-lodge amid a jumble of barns and hayricks, the King breakfasted off bread, cheese, and small beer. Joan Penderel, William's wife, washed and dressed his feet, cutting the blisters and inserting pads of paper between his toes. Then, as it was probable that the house would be searched by one of the numerous companies of soldiers in the neighbourhood, Charles and Careless went out again into the wood.

At the edge of the copse, overlooking the highway, was an old hollow oak. Into this, at Careless's suggestion, they climbed. The road below was soon busy with passers-by, and, through the veil of leaves that concealed them, they could see a party of soldiers searching the woods, where the Penderels, to allay suspicion, were "peaking up and down" with their nut-hooks. After a time Charles, worn out, fell asleep with his head in Careless's lap. As the hours passed and the King's fitful slumber continued, Careless's supporting arm became completely numbed. With infinite difficulty he awoke him, motioning him to silence lest the troopers below should hear.

At nightfall, when the seekers had gone home to prepare for the Sabbath, the Penderels brought a ladder to the tree, and Charles and Careless, tired, cramped and hungry, returned to Boscobel.

They passed through the big parlour of the house —it still stands—and up the stairs to a long attic gallery, used for storing cheeses. Here Mrs. Penderel, whom Charles christened Dame Joan, brought them a supper of chickens. Afterwards, as the night was fine, Charles sat for a while drinking wine in the garden, where Humphrey Penderel, the miller, came with news. While in the town that day he had been questioned by a republican officer, who suspected that he knew of the King's whereabouts. Humphrey had stoutly denied all knowledge, whereupon the officer showed him a proclamation, threatening death to all who should aid " Charles Stuart, a long dark man, above two yards high," and offering a reward of £1,000 to any one who should betray him. On hearing this Charles could not help reflecting on the temptation to which the poor men who sheltered him were exposed, but Careless, divining his thoughts, assured him that had the reward been a thousand times as great it could not have shaken their fidelity.

Before the King retired to rest Careless asked him what he would like for breakfast. Charles suggested mutton—a reply which caused the Penderels to exchange glances, for suspicion might be aroused should they attempt to obtain so unusual a luxury from their neighbours. He then made his way upstairs to a hiding-hole beneath the attic floor, where he spent the night on a straw pallet in a space little bigger than his own body.

He awoke early on Sunday morning, and the first sounds he heard were the church bells of Tong. Careless had been up before him and brought home his breakfast from Farmer Staunton's sheepcote. Together they fried the mutton collops before the fire.

Charles spent the greater part of the day reading in a "pretty arbour" in the garden, where there was a stone seat and table. "He commended the place for its retiredness," and so rested. Here, as in other places, there is a touch of the *Pilgrim's Progress* in the narrative: one is reminded of the shepherd's boy in the Valley of Humiliation. The King's state was indeed very low. He was surrounded by his enemies, a price was set on his head, and his poor protectors were hard put to it to know where to turn for food for another day.

While the King spent that Sabbath in the garden, John Penderel made his way to Moseley to consult Lord Wilmot and ask his help. He found Whitgreave and Father Huddleston, who informed him that Wilmot had left Moseley for Colonel Lane's house, Bentley, beyond Wolverhampton, intending thence to travel to the coast. As every hope of Charles's escape now depended on Wilmot, Penderel persuaded the others to take him to Bentley. Here Wilmot was found. In consultation with this cheerful, self-confident fugitive, who himself scorned any disguise but a hawk on his sleeve, it was decided that Charles should be brought that night from Boscobel to

Moseley, and that Wilmot should meet him there. On the way back, Penderel revealed the identity of their intending guest to Whitgreave and Huddleston. Having fixed a rendezvous at the foot of the garden, he returned with the news to Boscobel.

From Boscobel to Moseley was eight miles: the night was dark and stormy. Charles was still too lame to walk, and Humphrey Penderel's aged mill-horse, with a "pitiful old saddle and rough bridle," was requisitioned for him. He bade farewell to Careless and set out, surrounded by the five Penderel brothers and Yates, who marched beside him armed with bill-hooks and pistols, ready to sell their lives in his defence. With this curious and devoted army, the King crossed Chillington Park and the dark Staffordshire woods. At Pendeford Old Mill, two miles from his destination, he dismounted, leaving the horse with William, Humphrey, and George Penderel. He had gone a few paces on his way when he turned back and, begging their pardon that his troubles had made him forgetful of his friends, gave them his hand to kiss. The peasant brothers kneeling before the King in the storm are the epitome of this night. It was the supreme moment of their simple and pious lives.

In a little grove of trees in the corner of a field called the Moor, Father Huddleston was waiting for the King. He led him down a long walk of trees, through a gateway and across a garden. At the darkened door of the house Whitgreave did

not know before which of the eight shadowy figures, all habited alike, he should kneel, until the light of the hall fell on the pale, kingly boy, with his cropped hair and shabby clothes, and Wilmot said: "This is my master, your master, and the master of us all."

While Whitgreave fed the Penderels, Wilmot led the King through the hall and up the broad staircase to a panelled chamber. Here Charles, sitting on the bed, asked questions about the fate of his companions. Presently Whitgreave and Huddleston joined them with sack and biscuits and a change of shirt.[1] Refreshed, Charles expressed himself fit for a new march and ready, should God bless him with an army of resolute men, to drive all the rogues out of his kingdom.

Next morning, Monday, 8th September, the King awoke after the first night of comfort he had enjoyed since the battle. At breakfast he saluted old Mrs. Whitgreave, his host's mother, and made her sit with him at table while Huddleston and Whitgreave waited. The latter had sent all his servants to work in the fields, except a Catholic cook, who could be trusted with the half-truth that the house sheltered a fugitive from Worcester. Charles spent most of this day sitting in a room over the porch, watching the high road that ran

[1] Huddleston carefully secured Charles's old noggen shirt and blood-stained handkerchief, subsequently disposing of them to his friends, who found them most efficacious against the King's Evil and other maladies.

past the house. Three boys, who were living at Moseley as pupils of Huddleston's, were released from their lessons and told to keep guard, a task which they thoroughly enjoyed. That night at supper the eldest of them called to his companions, "Eat hard, boys, for we have been on the life-guard this day," an observation, as Whitgreave remarked, "more truly spoken than he was aware."

On Tuesday a message arrived that Colonel Lane would ride over that night to escort the King to Bentley, where he had arranged for him to start next day for the coast, disguised as a servant of his sister Jane, who had obtained a pass to visit a pregnant friend near Bristol. That morning Charles was in good spirits. He joined Huddleston and Whitgreave in the latter's study, and amused them by stories of his usage by the Scots. Seeing a volume of Catholic devotions on the table, he picked it up and read for a time, commending several passages to Huddleston's great joy and edification. In the afternoon there was an adventure. A servant arrived with news that a company of militia was on its way to search the house and arrest Whitgreave on a charge of having been present at Worcester. The latter at once hid Charles in the priest-hole, and, leaving all doors open to avert suspicion, went downstairs to meet the soldiers. A long and angry altercation took place in the doorway; in the end Whitgreave's neighbours were able to persuade the search-party

that he had never left Moseley during the battle. When at last he was free to let Charles out of his narrow hiding-place, he found him in some fear that he had been abandoned for ever.

That evening the King asked Huddleston to show him his master's oratory, saying "he knew he was a priest, and he need not fear to own it, for if it pleased God to restore him to his kingdom, they should never more need privacies." The priest led him to the little secret oratory. Charles looked with respect on this plain, decent room with its crucifix and candles, and with regard at the man who, without fear or cant, faced poverty and death in order to minister to his flock. Brought face to face with the same poverty and peril, Charles was perhaps nearer the inner truth of religion at that moment than at any other in his life. He stood there before the altar, no longer boy or king, but man in his simple dignity, humble in the presence of God.

At midnight Lane arrived from Bentley with two horses, and waited in an orchard at the foot of the garden. At the top of the stairs old Mrs. Whitgreave was waiting to bid farewell to her King. Pressing sweetmeats into his hand, the old lady knelt down before him, and in this posture she, her son, and Huddleston prayed God to preserve and bless him. Charles, deeply touched, gave them his hand to kiss, thanking them for their love and care, and telling them that, if ever it pleased God to restore him, he would not be

unmindful. After that he went into the garden. In the orchard the horses were waiting. The night was cold, and Huddleston lent the King his cloak ; once more squire and priest knelt : then Charles and Lane rode off into the darkness.

Charles II. 1931.

X

SIGNE TOKSVIG

THE CHILDHOOD OF A GENIUS

[Hans Andersen was born in 1805 at Odense, Denmark, the son of a cobbler and a washerwoman. From his earliest years he showed himself excitable, sensitive, and imaginative, with a passion for plays —he had a doll's theatre with which he played for hours—reading, and every kind of make-believe. The passage gives some account of the means his disposition found to express itself amid the straitened circumstances of his life.]

At the time of his father's death, Hans Christian was eleven, already very tall for his age, gawky, with a mop of whitish blond hair, a big nose, and eyes so small and so hidden back under their brows that many thought he was blind. A grey coat that was too small, and wooden shoes that were too big, were the salient parts of his costume. On Sundays he wore shoes, but they had to be enormously too big, as "his foot was growing." Ane Marie went out the whole day to wash for people, and the boy was left very much to himself and his

doll theatre ; his reveries only interrupted by odd errand-boy jobs, and by going to school, though it would be incorrect to say that school interrupted his reveries.

He was now in a city school for poor children, situated in a picturesque old building, where the classroom walls were hung with cloth on which were painted scenes from the Bible. Hans Christian could sit and stare at these, and dream himself so thoroughly into them, that the voice of the teacher never penetrated to his attention. He was scolded then for being "away" again, but the teacher never hit him. Hans Christian did not know his lessons especially well, but this was due, as it quite often is, to his being too clever. He learned by heart with astonishing facility. There was a boy next door who read his lessons aloud from morning till night for all the world to hear ; which made Ane Marie remark unwisely, "That's a stupid boy, he's always studying, and my Hans Christian never picks up a schoolbook, and yet he knows his lessons." Her boy needed to hear no more ; after that he took a pride in getting his lessons on his way to school or between classes, and he managed to do it, but he never learned to spell.

He tried to tell the other children the stories in his head, of which he naturally was the hero, but it needed only a word from one of them about madness to make him silent on that score. Yet he was on friendly terms with all of them ; he never in his life got into a fight with another boy. It

must, however, be admitted that this was perhaps more due to the swiftness of his legs for running, and the length of his arms for climbing, than to any forbearance on the part of other boys, though they probably liked him well enough if he stuck to re-telling what he had read, and kept from trying to dazzle them with his daydreams. But Hans Christian was one of the odd children who instinctively prefer making friends with their elders. They are sensitive, imaginative, reaching out for sympathy and comprehension, and they shy away from their natural playmates, as most children are relentless conformists, hunting and fighting in herds. Perhaps the grown-ups will understand; at any rate they won't jeer so cruelly. Hans Christian already had a great many friends among them: the old women in the hospital, the grocer's widow with the theatre programmes, the man with the handbills; and many others who felt attracted to a child who paid attention to them, listened to their stories, and told them his, brought them his little presents of wild-flower wreaths, and berries on a straw. Whenever it was the teacher's birthday, Hans Christian arrived with a wreath and a poem, which the teacher sometimes thanked him for and sometimes laughed at, but this did not deter the boy, who knew that the teacher wrote hymns. The glory of authorship was thus so vivid around him that it seemed an honour even to be laughed at by a real poet.

He now knew the word; his ear, quick to catch

every intonation, had heard it spoken as though it were something sacred. Near his home lived the widow and the old-maid sister of a pastor who had written poetry, simple folk-songs. Hans Christian had heard plays spoken of in his home, but not verse. The two old ladies were attracted by the fatherless boy, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that the boy whose father had been the only companion of his mind now felt the void, and went roaming around to fill it. The fine tendrils waving in the air instinctively stopped here. It was the first cultivated home in which the boy had ever been, and one can imagine the reverence which thrilled him. "My brother, the poet," the old maid would say, her eyes shining. From her he learned that to be a poet was something splendid, something glorious. She liked him to read aloud and to sing for her, and their home became his while his mother was out.

In the house of the pastor's widow Hans Christian met Shakespeare; not indeed the poet, for the translation was a poor one, but he met the grand and thrilling melodramatist. The vivid descriptions surged in his head, and the bold sanguinary happenings. He was haunted by the ghost in *Hamlet*, and he saw Lear raving on the heath. Immediately he performed the plays with his doll's theatre, and the more of the characters died, the better he liked the play. There was no help for it; he must write a piece himself. It was, naturally, a tragedy. Children are not little fairies to be

fed on mawkish honey-dew stories confected by sentimental elders, they are little primitives ; battle, murder, and sudden death are thrilling and amusing to them. As Hans Christian had just read three tragedies in which all the characters suffered violent death, he thought this was obligatory, and it gave him no little trouble. The subject he had from an old song ; it was Pyramus and Thisbe ; he disguised his indebtedness lightly in calling it *Abor and Elvira.* In the beginning, Elvira was expecting her Abor to meet her. As he did not come, she hung her pearl necklace on a hedge to show she had been there, and strolled off for a walk. Abor came, believed her killed by a wild animal, and killed himself. Elvira then arrived up and was due to die, but since the piece only filled four pages so far, Hans Christian let a hermit come in, who told Elvira that his son had fallen in love with her, and to touch the fair one's heart, the hermit spoke exclusively in Biblical quotations taken from a schoolbook. His son then came in and killed himself for love. Elvira followed his example, and the old hermit exclaimed, " Death I now perceive, all my limbs to cleave ! " whereupon he too fell down.

Filled to the brim and running over with creative joy, Hans Christian had no dingy doubt but that every one would wish to share the result with him. He never had ; for better or for worse, the world was always invited to listen. *Abor and Elvira* was read up and down the street, and seems indeed to

have met with nothing but kind words, and the praise that was such balm to him, but, and this too is characteristic, there was one single drop of acid, and it spoiled all the sweetness. Full of happy satisfaction, he read it at last to the neighbour whose son was so slow at his lessons. She listened. When he had finished she made a joke. "Abor" in Danish is very like the word for a fish, the perch, and the good woman said, "It ought to be called Perch and Cod," instead of *Abor and Elvira.*

Hans Christian fell from the heights into corresponding depths; wildly sensitive to ridicule, she had touched him on the fatal spot, and there was now no joy in the universe. The woman was probably both ignorant and illiterate, and every one else, including his new deities the pastor's widow and sister, had praised him, but it did not matter. He was utterly cast down. It was a curious kind of vanity. The coldly vain very soon manage to shelve unfavourable criticism, for them it practically does not exist. For Hans Christian very soon nothing else existed. He needed every suffrage, even the humblest, full of a deep nervous distrust of himself as he was. He covered it over, of course, with the energetic belief that he was destined to greatness, but criticism of any kind soon pierced through the belief, and he suffered.

This time he had his mother to go to, his shield against the world. Little as she shared his dramatic interests, she was well able to defend him against jealous neighbours. "She only says that because

her son hasn't written it," was her dry comment when the despairing author came to her, and Hans Christian was consoled.

He was so consoled that he immediately wrote a new play. This time he moved in higher spheres, a king and a princess were to be among the characters. Shakespeare, to be sure, made royalty talk like other people, but as this did not seem quite right to him, he asked his mother and some of the neighbours how a king did talk.

No one seemed to know much about it; they said it was so long since a king had been in Odense, but to the best of their belief he talked foreign languages; not such a bad guess, since German had been spoken at the court for a great many years. However, Hans Christian seized the idea in the plural, and got hold of a polyglot dictionary, with French, German, and English phrases and their Danish translation. Now he was on top. Each sentence spoken by the royal personages was a careful mosaic of words from these languages, with a little Danish to cement them. "*Guten Morgen, mon père, har De godt sleeping?*" was the Princess's question to her father in the best royal polyglot.

About this time he made a list of the plays which he intended to write, twenty-five of them, among which were such titles as "The Evening Promenade, or The Cook and the Count," "The Two Murderers," "Qvarto and Laura," "Zemire from Bagda," and "The Temple of Honour."

It is not known if Hans Christian ever wrote any of them, but a short time after his play about royalty, the King of Denmark did come to Odense, and Hans Christian saw him from the top of the churchyard wall. But although he gazed at him with the reverence he never lost for anointed heads, he was disappointed. The King was not attired in gold and silver, he wore a long blue cape with a red velvet collar.

Hans Christian returned to his own self-created royalty with great satisfaction. He made no exception, from the highest to the lowest; wherever there was an ear, he read the new play to it. He says himself that it never occurred to him that any one would feel less happy about listening than he did about reading; and apparently his kindly friends did not undeceive him. Quite likely they enjoyed themselves, it being one thing to hear a grown-up read his absurd play, and another to hear an odd and eager boy.

There was certainly something about Hans Christian which people could not resist. They did not listen to him or lend him books merely because he had the supernormal audacity to ask them to. People don't. It was the nature of the request. He asked them for a book; something which most boys plead to be delivered from. Hans Christian read everything he could lay hold of. As soon as he heard that people owned books, he presented himself at their door, whether he knew them or not, and convinced them that he must have a

book, as a really hungry beggar convinces one he must have food. The entreaty in his pleasant voice and expressive face was all-conquering. A lady who found this unknown boy on her doorstep, and whom he magnetized into lending him a book, was so pleased with his care of it that she offered him the run of her whole collection.

Impossible really to understand what this meant to Hans Christian, unless one has been a child with the same fierce book-hunger, the same all-absorbing, quivering joy in getting it satisfied. There is so much that an imaginative child of eleven or twelve wants to know, and books seem so many gates to the world for him. Hans Christian knew the breathless pleasure of opening new ones, of living in many different worlds, and lives. He at last met Shakespeare the poet in a better translation, and now even Holberg was dethroned, not to mention the verses of the poor pastor. With his ability to learn by heart, he committed many scenes from the plays to memory, declaiming them sonorously in the little turf-shed by his home, but his taste does not seem to have been improved. When he saw an awful German melodrama, it pleased him so much that he acted it at home, making up the German language as he went along, throwing his mother's apron over his shoulders for a knightly cape, and swimming on a footstool on the floor, like the heroine in the Danube.

This performance not unnaturally worried his mother, and she strictly forbade any more such

nonsense, probably not forgetting to mention the madness and queerness of his grandfather and father. But Hans Christian was hopeless. When a troop of acrobats and pantomime dancers came to Odense, he was inspired to dance a whole Harlequin pantomime for his mother. This frightened her into saying that she would apprentice him to the acrobats if he would not be sensible, and then they would beat him, and give him oil to make him supple enough to dance on a rope. Nothing daunted, he begged her to do it; he wanted very much to dance on a rope, and this drove her to the despairing and futile threat of a whipping.

The Life of Hans Andersen. 1933.

XI

EVELYN WAUGH

A JESUIT HERO

[This extract describes the journeys taken in 1580 by Edmund Campion and Robert Persons, two of the first Jesuits to land in England, through the Midlands, in order to minister to the spiritual needs of their flocks. It was a task of the utmost peril, for Catholicism was proscribed in England, and to encourage it, as the Jesuits were doing, was to lay oneself open to a capital charge.

Campion, a scholar and speaker of high distinction at Oxford, who had become converted to Catholicism, and admitted to the Society of Jesuits, after an elaborate training at Douai, Rome, and Prague, was now selected as one of the first Jesuits to come back to win his nation to her ancient faith again. He was martyred a year later.]

WE have few details of this expedition. The two priests separated at Hoxton, and met again three months later at Uxbridge ; in the intervening time Persons had passed through Gloucester, Hereford, Worcester, and up into Derbyshire; Campion had been in Berkshire, Oxfordshire, and Northampton-

shire. Both they and their hosts were careful to leave no record of their visits, and the letters in which the Jesuits reported progress to their superiors maintain strict anonymity for their converts; edifying anecdotes are related of "a certain noble lady" who was offered her liberty on the condition of once walking through a Protestant church, but indignantly refused; of "a young lady of sixteen" who was flung into the public prison for prostitutes on account of her courageous answers to the "sham Bishop of London"; of a "boy of, I believe, twelve years" who was inveigled into acting as page at a Protestant wedding, was inconsolable with shame until he was able to make his confession to a priest—but nothing is said to identify the protagonists. The only names that can be given with any certainty as Campion's hosts during this journey are Sir William Catesby of Ashby St. Leger, Lord Vaux of Harrowden, and Sir Thomas Tresham, a man of exceptional character, eventually brought to ruin for his faith, whose singular and brilliant taste in architecture may still be seen in the exquisite unfinished mansion at Lyveden, and the unique triangular pavilion, planned and intricately decorated in honour of the Trinity, which stands, concealed and forlorn, among the trees that border the park at Rushton. It is possible, however, to form a tolerably clear, general impression of the journey from the letters mentioned and the numerous sources of information about Elizabethan conditions.

He travelled in fair comfort, mounted and equipped as befitted a gentleman of moderate means. He was attended by his servant, and more often than not by one or more of the younger members of the household where he had last stayed, but it was his habit for most of the way to ride in silence at some little distance from his companions, praying and meditating as he had done on the road to Rheims. Changes of horse and clothing were provided for him at different stages; he was constantly on the move, rarely, for fear of the pursuivants, stopping anywhere for more than one night. He must in this way have visited fifty or more houses during the three months.

Along his road the scenes were familiar enough, but he was seeing them with new eyes; the scars of the Tudor revolution were still fresh and livid; the great houses of the new ruling class were building, and in sharp contrast to their magnificence stood the empty homesteads of the yeomen, evicted to make way for the "grey-faced sheep" or degraded to day-labour on what had once been their common land; the village churches were empty shells, their altars torn out and their ornaments defaced; while here and there throughout his journey he passed, as, with a different heart, he had often passed before, the buildings of the old monasteries, their roofs stripped of lead and their walls a quarry for the new contractors. The ruins were not yet picturesque; moss and ivy had

barely begun their work, and age had not softened the stark lines of change. Many generations of orderly living, much gentle association, were needed before, under another queen, the State Church would assume the venerable style of *Barchester Towers*. But if the emotions of the journey were shame and regret, hope and pride waited for him at the end of the day. Wherever they went the priests found an eager reception. Sometimes they stayed in houses where only a few were Catholic. There was constant coming and going in the vast ramshackle households of the day, and an elaborate hierarchy in the great retinues; there were galleries where the master never penetrated. It was natural enough that any respectable wayfarer should put up there for the night, whether or no he had any acquaintance with his host. "*We passed through the most part of the shires of England*," wrote Persons, "*preaching and administering the sacraments in almost every gentleman's and nobleman's house that we passed by, whether he was Catholic or not, provided he had any Catholics in his house to hear us. We entered for the most part, as acquaintance or kinsfolk of some person that lived within the house, and when that failed us, as passengers or friends of some gentleman that accompanied us; and after ordinary salutations we had our lodgings, by procurement of the Catholics, within the house, in some part retired from the rest, where putting ourselves in priests' apparel and furniture*," they heard confessions, perhaps preached, and very early next morning

said Mass, gave communion, and started on their way again, leaving the rest of the household in ignorance of their identity.

At Catholic houses they found themselves guests of the highest honour, and there they sometimes prolonged their stay for a few days, until the inevitable warning of the pursuivants' approach drove them once more on to the road. In recent years most of the houses had been furnished with secret cupboards where were stored the Mass vestments, altar stones, sacred vessels, and books; these "priest-holes" were usually large enough to provide a hiding-place for the missionaries in case of a sudden raid; in some cases there were complete chapels with confessionals and priest's room. Many houses sheltered one of the old Marian priests who had left his cure at Elizabeth's succession, and now lived in nominal employment as secretary and butler. At this early date these seculars had no quarrel with the Fathers of the Society. The Jesuits, fresh from Rome and the Continental schools, were as welcome to them as to their flocks; cut off, as they were, from episcopal control, from their reading and from intercourse with other clerics, they constantly found themselves confronted with problems to which their simple training afforded no solution; all these were brought to Campion and Persons. Their prayers were always for more Jesuits. "*The priests of our country*," wrote Campion, "*being themselves most excellent for virtue and learning, yet have raised so great*

an opinion of the Society, that I dare scarcely touch the exceeding reverence all Catholics do unto us. How much more is it requisite that such as hereafter are to be sent to supply, whereof we have great need, be such as may answer all men's expectation of them." And Persons : " *It is absolutely necessary that more of our Society should be sent . . . who must be very learned men, on account of the many entangled cases of conscience, which arise from no one here having ample faculties, and from the difficulty of consulting the Holy See.*"

Campion found his Catholic hosts impoverished to the verge of ruin by the recusancy fines ; often the household were in mourning for one or more of their number who had been removed to prison. " No other talk but of death, flight, prison, or spoil of friends," yet everywhere he was amazed at the constancy and devotion which he found. The listless, yawning days were over, the half-hour's duty perfunctorily accorded on days of obligation. Catholics no longer chose their chaplain for his speed in saying Mass, or kept Boccaccio bound in the covers of their missals. Driven back to the life of the catacombs, the Church was recovering their temper. No one now complained of the length of the services, a priest reported to Father Agazzari ; if a Mass did not last nearly an hour they were discontented, and if, as occasionally happened, several priests were together, the congregation would assist at five or six Masses in one morning.

Word would go round the country-side that Campion had arrived, and throughout the evening Catholics of every degree, squire and labourer and deposed cleric, would stealthily assemble. He would sit up half the night receiving each in turn, hearing their confessions and resolving their difficulties. Then before dawn a room would be prepared for Mass. Watches were set in case of alarm. The congregation knelt on the rush-strewn floor. Mass was said, communion was given. Then Campion would preach.

It needs little fancy to reconstruct the scene; the audience hushed and intent, every member of whom was risking liberty and fortune, perhaps his life, by attendance. The dusk lightened and the candles paled on the improvised altar, the tree tops outside the window took fire, as Campion spoke. The thrilling tones, the profusion of imagery, the polish and precision, the balanced, pointing argument, the whole structure and rich ornament of rhetoric which had stirred the lecture halls and collegiate chapels of Oxford and Douai, Rome, Prague, and Rheims, inspired now with more than human artistry, rang through the summer dawn. And when the discourse had mounted to its peroration and the fiery voice had dropped to the quiet, traditional words of the blessing, a long silence while the priest disrobed and assumed once more his secular disguise; a hurried packing away of the altar furniture, a few words of leave-taking, and then the horses' hooves clattered once more in

the cobbled yard ; Campion was on his way, and the Catholics dispersed to their homes.

The danger was increasingly great. "*I cannot long escape the hands of the heretics,*" said Campion, in the letter quoted above, " *the enemy have so many eyes, so many tongues, so many scouts and crafts. I am in apparel to myself very ridiculous ; I often change my name also. I read letters sometimes myself that in the first front tell news that Campion is taken. . . . Threatening edicts come forth against us daily. . . . I find many neglecting their own security to have only care of my safety.*"

More than once while Campion was sitting at dinner strangers would be heard at the outer doors. " Like deer when they hear the huntsmen " the company would leap to their feet, and Campion would be rushed into hiding. Sometimes it proved to be a false alarm ; sometimes the pursuivants would enter, question the inmates, and depart satisfied. The party would resume their meal and the interrupted conversation. Events of this kind were now a part of his life, but by the loyalty and discretion of his friends, and by his own resources, he escaped unmolested through the three-month journey, and his report ends in a triumphant mood. " *There will never want in England men that will have care of their own salvation, nor such as shall advance other men's; neither shall this Church here ever fail so long as priests and pastors shall be found for their sheep, rage man or devil never so much.*"

Edmund Campion. 1935.

XII

PETER QUENNELL

A WHIG CIRCLE

[This passage describes Holland House, the most celebrated of the great houses where the Whig aristocracy of the early nineteenth century forgathered. The party represented a minority of the nation, for it was opposed to the war with Napoleon, in the cause of which the sympathies of the body of the nation were engaged. But as the ancient house of Charles Fox, the uncle of Lord Holland, Holland House was the repository of pure Whig doctrine. Moreover, its society was the most cultivated of the age. Sydney Smith, Macaulay, Byron, from whose story this passage is extracted, were all habitués there : it was there that conversation was esteemed to achieve its highest perfection.

Among the many names referred to, Lady Granville was the wife of the distinguished diplomat and ambassador at Paris ; Madame de Lieven the wife of the Russian Ambassador in England ; Lady Caroline Lamb was the wife of Lord Melbourne, the future Prime Minister, also a mistress of

Byron's ; Lady Jersey another leading hostess of London Society. Mr. Quennell compares this society with that of France eighty years later, as it is described in the novels of Marcel Proust ; Madame Verdurin and the Duchesse de Guermantes are leaders of this fictitious social world.]

IF Lady Jersey had something in common with Oriane de Guermantes, Lady Holland—who represented the intellectual apex of Whig society, while Lady Jersey shone from its social zenith—bore a certain resemblance to another and yet more famous Proustian personage, Madame Verdurin, and the coterie among whom she passed her life to *le petit noyau*, as described in *Sodome et Gomorrhe* and *Un Amour de Swann*. She exercised the same capricious tyranny. Lady Holland, however, was more powerful than *la patronne* ; and, though few of her intimates really loved her, and though the resentment and criticism she aroused grumble on for several decades through the letters and memoirs of her acquaintances, it was a brave man or an exceptional woman who defied her wrath. Like Madame Verdurin, she was tyrannous for its own sake. A virtuoso in the art of obtaining submission, even from the proudest and apparently least tractable guests, nowhere, perhaps, does her character appear more distinctly than in an anecdote related by the haughty and formidable Madame de Lieven to Lady Granville. " Ma chère," began Madame de Lieven, " j'étais chez elle. . . .

On annonce Pasquier. Elle a l'air tout charmé, tout flatté. Elle me dit : ' Restez, je vous supplie ; causez avec le Chancelier.' Je résiste ; elle m'implore de ne pas l'abandonner. Je cède. Pas plutôt assise avec tout cet entourage qui nous regarde, qu'elle laisse tomber son sac. Elle me tape sur l'épaule : ' *Pick it up, my dear; pick it up* ' — et moi, tout étonnée, en bonne bête, me plongeant sur le tapis pour ramasser ses chiffons." Was not this, continued Lady Granville, the acuteness of whose observations would have delighted Marcel Proust, " a true and incomparable Holly-ism, taking out of Lieven's mouth the taste of the little flutter at the visits and the *besoin* of her support . . . and showing off, what I believe never was seen before, Madame de Lieven as a humble companion ? "

It seems possible that the flavour of deliberate impertinence that distinguished Lady Holland's manners may have been sharpened by the fact that, owing to a somewhat unconventional early life, her social position was very largely self-made and that she was never on visiting terms with the more puritanical English ladies. A rich West Indian heiress and the divorced wife of Sir Godfrey Webster (whose flirtation with Lady Caroline was to cause so much domestic hubbub), she had married Lord Holland in 1797. The Hollands' first son was illegitimate ; till 1805 they had lived much abroad ; but, in spite of these tempestuous beginnings, Lady Holland had raised herself to an eminence where she levied contributions,

promulgated laws, and retained—while constantly exasperating, snubbing, and humiliating—the army of admirers she had gathered at Holland House. Here assembled both writers and politicians. Within easy riding or driving distance of the centre of London, Holland House, the big Elizabethan mansion built by Sir Walter Cope, a protégé of one of the Cecils, was still a pleasant country seat, situated far beyond the turnpike and surrounded by the park and gardens that Charles James Fox had known as a boy. The library was large and the dinners were excellent. Lord Holland, "a great grig and a great love," made up in sweetness and smoothness of disposition for all the virtues that his wife so conspicuously lacked, and bore her despotism with invariable good temper. The characters of husband and wife were complementary; the hostess aroused storms which the host pacified. . . .

Altogether it was a stimulating house to visit. From his uncle, Lord Holland had inherited not only his thick, dark eyebrows, but that breadth and cultivated catholicity of learning which had made Charles James Fox so extraordinary and refreshing a portent in English public life. Painting, it is true, gave him no pleasure, and music (noted Rogers) "absolute pain"; but of books he had a very wide knowledge; and to his uncle he owed his sound yet conservative literary taste —those standards that laid special emphasis on "freedom of manner," "easy grace" of diction,

but admitted the immense superiority of Homer to Virgil, and of Shakespeare and Chaucer (" What a genius Chaucer was ! ") to the more polished and fluent writers of the Augustan age. Both the Hollands, moreover, were accomplished *gourmets* ; and the schoolboy who, asked what he would prefer for dinner, chose duck and green peas, to be followed by apricot tart, was gravely congratulated by Lord Holland and assured that, if in all the important questions of his life he decided as wisely, he would be a great and good man.

The chief drawback of dinner-parties at Holland House was that the guests were usually overcrowded, and that Lady Holland had a habit of rearranging them, of squeezing in new guests at the last moment, and of perpetually dropping her fan or bag, which the nearest gentleman was obliged to grope for and pick up. Sometimes Lord Holland was her victim. Now it was his white waistcoat. . . . Expanded over his vast stomach, it gave him the look, Luttrell suggested, of a turbot standing on its tail ; and Lady Holland refused to sit down to dinner till he had consented to change it. Now it was the crutches with which he supported his ponderous gouty frame. . . . " Put away your nasty crutches, Lord Holland ; you look as if you were in prison." " Oh, dear woman, pray let me have them ; I like to have them near me." " Impossible. Mary, take away your papa's crutches. . . ." In the drawing-room she was equally abrupt. " Have the goodness, sir,

to stir the fire!" was the command, uttered in tones of extreme sharpness, with which she dislodged any guest presumptuous enough to occupy the rug between herself and the fireside. The fire-screen was never arranged to her liking; at dinner it was very often so placed as to shut off all warmth from the rest of the company, who sat in patient wretchedness, almost petrified with cold, looking "as if they were just unpacked, like salmon from an ice-basket, and set down to table for that day only."

Such were the cruder aspects of her dictatorship. Yet, from the beginning of the century till the year 1845 when, an agnostic to the last, she faced death without the smallest sign of religious feeling but with "a very philosophical calmness and resolution and perfect good-humour," she had been a rallying-point for some of the best brains of the period; and it was at her house that the common-sense, worldly charm and picturesque, yet restrained, imagination of Sydney Smith, Lady Holland's especial favourite, were confronted by the incessant verbosity of a talker who (according to Sydney Smith) not only overflowed with learning but "stood in the slop"—Macaulay, an apostle of the Victorian spirit. At Holland House two periods seem to converge; representatives of that temperate and aristocratic liberalism which preceded the Reform Bill of 1832, Lord Holland and his friends had little in common with an age of which some of the chief actors had already begun to make

an appearance, though this new age was to realize many of their dreams. Meanwhile they formed a brilliant opposition. Rather oddly intertwined with the hatred of " tyranny " that characterized Lord Holland's conduct in questions of domestic politics was Lady Holland's worship of the Emperor Napoleon, whose exile she afterwards consoled by regular offerings. The " poor dear man," as she usually called him, looked forward to " les pruneaux de Madame Holland."

Politics, however, were not the sole—nor, indeed, were they the chief—preoccupation of the parties that gathered in the big cheerful dining-room, with its crimson damask walls, its sideboard " glittering with venerable family plate," its huge looking-glass and its china closet, filled with the bright and delicate colours of Oriental porcelain ; or explored the long panelled library, where the ceiling was painted blue and powdered with golden stars. Besides the politicians, there were authors, reviewers, and journalists, and, among professional writers, men who dabbled in literature, society and the arts of good living—Rogers, of whom it was said that, if one borrowed five hundred pounds from him, he would control his natural spitefulness until one came to pay it back ; and the wealthy Radical, " Conversation " Sharp. Henry Luttrell was celebrated as a talker and wit. The tone of humour is always hard to preserve ; but, while Rogers's witticisms, uttered in a faint and expiring voice, were uncommonly savage, Luttrell's were

distinguished by a certain bonhomie. It was hardly possible, declared Greville, to live with a more agreeable man. He was the " most epigrammatic conversationalist " Byron had ever encountered ; " there is a terseness, and wit, mingled with fancy, in his observations, that no one else possesses. . . . Then, unlike all, or most, other wits, Luttrell is never obtrusive ; even the choicest *bons mots* are only brought forth when perfectly applicable, and then are given in a tone of good breeding which enhances their value."

Curran, too, aroused Byron's admiration. An Irish patriot who had migrated to Westminster when the ill-fated Irish parliament ceased to exist, he was a fine orator whose native ability more than counterbalanced the effect of his Irish accent and the uncouth gestures with which he spoke. As he developed his theme (we read in Holland's *Memoirs of the Whig Party*) " Mr. Pitt beat time to the artificial but harmonious cadence of his periods, and Mr. Canning's countenance kindled at the brightness of a fancy which in glitter fully equalled and in real warmth far exceeded his own." Curran's interest in Catholic Emancipation naturally brought him into touch with Lord Holland, the champion of every liberal measure. Byron heard him talk at Holland House. " Curran ! " [he wrote in his journal of *Detached Thoughts*] " Curran's the Man who struck me most. Such imagination. . . . His *published* life, his published speeches, give you *no* idea of the Man—none at all. He was a *Machine*

of Imagination. . . . I did not see a great deal of Curran—only in 1813 ; but I met him at home (for he used to call on me) and in society . . . and he was wonderful, even to me, who had seen many remarkable men of the time."

Curran, however, was not an habitué. With his " fifty faces and twice as many voices," a person of irrepressible gaiety that afterwards degenerated into profound melancholy, he was a rare but delightful apparition. Other members of the circle were regular inmates ; Luttrell and an Eton friend of Lord Holland's, Hookham Frere, might supply surface brilliance, but John Allen, a large, white-headed figure, concealing very bright eyes behind a pair of gigantic silver-rimmed spectacles, who lived at Holland House as librarian, steward, and general factotum for more than twenty devoted and laborious years, provided the solid groundwork of exact scholarship. Illustrative of the scope of conversation is the account of a debate, held after Byron's death, in which Allen engaged William Lamb—then Lord Melbourne—on the subject of the Christian Church. " Allen spoke of the early reformers, the Catharists. . . ." Not to be outdone, Melbourne quoted Vigilantius's letter to Jerome, and asked Allen about the 11th of Henry IV., an Act passed by the Commons against the Church, and mentioned the dialogue between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely at the beginning of Shakespeare's *Henry V.*," which Lord Holland sent for and read, Melbourne know-

ing it all by heart. . . . About etymologies Melbourne quoted Tooke's *Diversions of Purley*, which he seemed to have at his fingers' ends." On a different occasion, talk of women writers prompted the discussion of Madame de Sévigné, Madame de Staël, Sappho, Mrs. Somerville, and the admirable novels of Miss Austen; whence conversation strayed to English history and Klopstock.

Byron: The Years of Fame. 1935.

XIII

GEOFFREY SCOTT

BENJAMIN CONSTANT'S YOUTH

[This passage is an account of the early life of Benjamin Constant, the Swiss writer and publicist. In later years he was to become famous in French politics of the early nineteenth century, and as the author of *Adolphe*, perhaps the earliest psychological novel. The Mackintosh alluded to is the distinguished Scottish philosopher.]

NEAR by, at the parish church of St. Francis at Lausanne, on November 14, 1767 . . . an infant had been presented for baptism by the name of Benjamin, son of Juste Constant de Rebecque, an officer in the Dutch service, and of Dame Henriette de Chandieu, his wife. Round that cradle the ironic powers had gathered; on this infant as he grew they had showered all their favourite contradictions. They gave him ambition and self-mockery; they made him impulsive yet sceptical; an enthusiast, yet aloof. Conscious of his dual nature, at war in himself and with the world, he learnt to hide the sincerity of a saint behind the

poses of a mummer. He seemed of all men the most eccentric : yet understood, as few have done, man's universal motives. He perched in the world like some strange bird of exotic plumage, thinking human thoughts. . . .

An eccentric father and a still more eccentric education had already gone far to complete the native oddity of Benjamin. Father and son were both deeply imbued with the Constant heredity of self-consciousness, self-mockery, self-torture. They were estranged by their very similarity, and bound together by the pity of their own estrangement. The father hid his timidity behind a heavy smoke-screen of sarcastic reserve ; the son, behind the exploding fireworks of his brilliance, nervously concealed the timidity he had inherited from his father. In flight from themselves, they could do nothing for each other.

Benjamin, in the *Cahier Rouge*, has recorded his first sense of this situation :

" Unfortunately my father's conduct was dignified and generous rather than tender. I was fully conscious of all his right to my gratitude and respect, but there was no confidence between us. There was something ironic in his turn of mind which went very ill with my character. I was at an age when I only asked to be allowed those simple enthusiasms which remove the soul from the sphere of the commonplace and inspire in it the scorn of surrounding objects. I found in my father not a critic but a cold and caustic observer who

at first would smile with compassion and soon conclude the conversation with impatience. I do not recollect during my first eighteen years having ever passed an hour in conversation with him. His letters were affectionate, and full of reasonable advice ; but no sooner were we face to face than there was something constrained in him which I could not explain to myself, and which reacted on me most painfully. I did not know that even with his son my father was timid, and that often, after having waited for some signs of affection which his apparent coldness had seemed to forbid me, he would go away, his eyes moist with tears, and complain to others that I did not love him."

Yet, in the sequel, Benjamin was to give abundant proof of natural affection, and years of his life were to be devoted to defending his father from the disasters which were to shower on the colonel's proud and saturnine head. And the timidity which Benjamin " did not then know " he was later to recognize as the key to his own meteoric behaviour.

Meteoric, also, was Benjamin's education, and by no means calculated to inspire a confidence in human nature or affairs.

His mother had died a few days after his birth. " My birth," he says, " was the first of my misfortunes." The colonel, long absent on regimental duty, entrusted Benjamin to a series of fantastic tutors, whose services were punctuated by irruptions of the angry soldier. With the first of these preceptors Benjamin entered into a characteristic

conspiracy to invent a new and secret language, of which the alphabet, vocabulary, and grammar were successively evolved: by this ingenious expedient the child Benjamin, at the age of five, found himself possessed of a precocious command of the rudiments of Greek. But after this hopeful beginning, Juste Constant bore the boy away to Brussels and handed him to the charge of "an atheist of mediocre ability but an accomplished libertine," who for the greater convenience of his pleasures took the child to live in a house of ill fame. Becoming tardily aware of Benjamin's lamentable situation, Juste arrived hot foot from his regiment—"*mon cher papa, qui arrive*"—and, with every mark of natural indignation, transferred his son to the care of a music master. This worthy man had nothing to impart, and Benjamin, now aged eight, shifted for himself in a neighbouring library, where, from eight to ten hours a day, he consumed all the novels and irreligious tracts of the time. Once more, a cloud of dust: *mon cher papa, qui arrive*; Juste has discovered a new tutor, extremely fair-spoken, extremely expensive, Monsieur Gobert. For a year Benjamin worked with Monsieur Gobert: his work consisted in transcribing a history by Monsieur Gobert of which Monsieur Gobert required several copies. But he addressed himself to this task with such scant attention and executed it in so disastrous a handwriting, that at the end of the year he had not advanced beyond the preface; and grave public scandal having

meanwhile been excited by Monsieur Gobert's private morals (tutors were all alike), Juste arrived once more and removed his son with expressions of customary force. He selected, by way of successor to Monsieur Gobert, an unfrocked monk, who subsequently committed suicide. Juste at once conceived a profound contempt for this "good and spiritual man of feeble character"; and as Benjamin, at thirteen, was observed to possess the intellectual gifts of a man of thirty, his father bore him off, at this tender age, with the intention of placing him in the University of Oxford. Notwithstanding his son's precocity, which was universally attested, Juste decided, upon a closer view of this seat of learning, that the boy was too young. Benjamin was swept back to the Continent. More tutors were selected, no more fortunate than the first; Juste abandoned the tutorial system, and Benjamin at the age of fourteen entered the University of Erlangen.

These incidents of Benjamin's boyhood do much to explain his disillusioned mind and nervous sensibility. Yet even in these early years every one remarked on the candour and sweetness of disposition which accompanied his precocious sagacity, and on the uncanny detachment which was compatible with the highest spirits.

His letters at this period give proof of this most curious quality: a double life in which mind and temperament are completely severed. He is barely twelve when he writes: "My *étourderies* upset all

my plans. I wish there were some way of preventing my blood from circulating so fast and giving it a more cadenced movement. I have tried to see if music could produce this effect ; I play *adagios* and *largos* fit to send thirty cardinals to sleep, but by some magic or other these slow airs always end by becoming *prestissimo*. The same thing happens when I dance. The minuet always terminates in a few jumps. I think, my dear grandmother, that this trouble is incurable, and will prove impervious to reason. There should be some spark of reason in me as I am a few days over twelve, yet I cannot detect its empire. . . . Do you know, my dear grandmother, that I go into society twice a week ? I have a fine suit, a sword, my hat under my arm, one hand on my chest, the other on my hip ; I hold myself very straight and appear as grown-up as I can. I look and I listen, and thus far feel no envy for the pleasures of the fine world : the people look as if they had no great love for each other. At the same time the gaming-table and the gold I see spinning excites me. I would like to win some for a thousand needs I have, though others treat my needs as fancies."

Constant is here in miniature. The child Benjamin looks down on himself in the ballroom, and knows just how he appears and how he feels, and speculates on what he will become, and realizes already that the faculty of reason—with which no child surely was ever more precociously endowed —will have very little control in the matter : the

detached reason, relentless and quiet in the midst of the cataract, taking no responsibility, experimenting on itself, uncoloured by self-pity or self-praise, concerned merely to take note of the adventure and to record, if need be, the catastrophe.

In other childish passages his more serious interests are foreshadowed, Homer already "gives me great ideas"—forty-eight years later he published *The History of Polytheism*; and there are pages which charmingly prove the warmth and native loyalty of his affections. But already the gambler glints from Benjamin's infant eye—"*le jeu et l'or que je vois rouler me cause quelque émotion*"; and already the Don Juan expresses himself with an infant relish: he is ten when he writes, "I sometimes see here an English girl of my own age whom I prefer to Cicero and Seneca. She teaches me Ovid, whom she has never read and never heard of: I find the whole of him in her eyes. I have written a little novel for her. I send you the first pages; if you like you shall have the rest."

Possessed of these whimsical attractions, Benjamin no sooner arrived at Erlangen than he was given a position at the court of the Margrave of Anspach, and found himself at fourteen the favourite of the Margravine. "As I did not hesitate to say everything that came into my mind, laughed at everybody and maintained the most absurd opinions, I was no doubt a sufficient diversion for a German court." His dual nature, at once grave and fantastic, showed itself: he threw himself

into philosophers and historians at the University, and piled up gambling debts at court. At fifteen, for the greater dignity of his position and the edification of the Margravine, he selected a mistress. "I am probably the only man," observes Benjamin, "whom this woman actually resisted," but the reputation thus acquired and the exasperation of the Margrave "consoled me sufficiently for having to pass my time with a lady who had no attractions for me, and for enjoying no rights in return for my expense." The wrath of the Margravine was implacable; Benjamin was disgraced, once again Juste Constant intervened, and father and son set out forthwith for Edinburgh.

Here, Benjamin tells us, he passed the happiest eighteen months of his life. Edinburgh was at the height of its European fame; professors were great men, and philosophy was in fashion. Benjamin, with intervals for the culture of the wild oat, studied Greek and History with ardour, and the records of the Speculative Society attest his force and assiduity as a debater.[1] His themes were characteristic: the Influence of Pagan Mythology; universal toleration; duelling; Ossian; the emancipation of women. He spoke English fluently with a Scotch accent. Mackintosh recalls the young Baron de Constant, a Swiss of singular manners and powerful talents, as a leader among the brilliant students of that day.

[1] *v.* Rudler, *Jeunesse de B. Constant.*

Constant's philosophic and moralizing bent, coupled with a native wildness, were better suited to the zest of the northern city than to the rococo pleasantries of a German court. But new gambling debts beset him ; he retired to Paris in a mood of dissipation ; Juste Constant's chariot once more rattled up the street, and Benjamin in taciturn penitence was removed to Brussels.

Here he first conceived the plan for that history of polytheism which was to haunt him all his life. Later on, when he had reacted from the Voltairean bias of his youth, he wrote : " Had I been less ready to abandon myself to all the impressions which were agitating me, I might in two years have achieved a very bad book and acquired a little passing reputation which would have satisfied me greatly. My *amour-propre* once engaged, I should never have been able to alter my opinions, and the first chance paradox would have fettered me all my life. If laziness has its disadvantages, it has also some solid rewards."

Nevertheless, not laziness, but another frailty which he shared with the ancient gods, was the true obstacle to the progress of the history of polytheism. Two liaisons, at this period, are recorded by Benjamin in a manner that throws light upon his character. Of the first he wrote, twenty-six years later, " Madame Johannot has a place in my memory apart from all other women. My relation with her was brief, and amounted to little, but the tenderness she gave me was paid for

by no agitation and no suffering, and at forty-five I still feel gratitude for the happiness I owed her at eighteen. Her days ended in conditions of great sadness. . . . I was living in Paris, in her neighbourhood, not knowing she was there, and she died within a few steps of a man who has never heard her name spoken without the profoundest emotion, thinking herself abandoned and forgotten by the entire world." The object of the second friendship, to which, after a feverish bout of mythology, Benjamin shortly abandoned himself, was Mrs. Trevor, wife of the British Ambassador at Turin. The affair is recounted in the *Cahier Rouge*, and exhibits Benjamin in his usual mixture of *gaucherie* and histrionics, wildness and timidity, irony and suffering, with suitable duels and beating of his head against the wall. The fact is that in Benjamin's dual personality the histrionic element was an impetus with which his mental demand for sincerity was perpetually at war. Women evoked the actor in him, and played upon that; but he reserved a lasting gratitude for those who freed him from the exasperation of his own comedy by piercing behind the mask.

This is the picture of Benjamin, from his own confessions in the *Cahier Rouge*. But behind this harlequinade waits the author of *Adolphe*, a book that could not be grounded save in suffering, nor conceived save in the loneliest sincerity of contemplation, nor constructed save by the clearest and most pitiless art.

How could it be otherwise, with the nature so sensitive, the blood so fast, the mind so cold and aloof? Grave projects, fame, and the war for liberty; great books, the history of religion; tender and continuous human loyalties; all these. But try as he might to play life's tune *adagio maestoso* it ended—like those early exercises—an agitated *prestissimo*; and however courtly the minuet, he must needs destroy the figure by some access of violence, some frozen gesture of timidity, some sudden impulse of escape; yet all the time the measure of his mind beat time with undeflecting justice.

Portrait of Zélide. 1925.

XIV

DORMER CRESTON

GEORGE IV.'S BOYHOOD

He was born in 1762, and as a child, the first arrival of a family of fifteen, had been brought up chiefly at Kew. His mother, Queen Charlotte, was so enchanted at having created him, that she had him modelled full-length in wax, and kept this effigy lying on her toilet-table on a crimson cushion under a bell-glass. Soon after his birth she allowed forty ladies at a time into her bedroom to gaze at him. For the occasion she had had her own bed and the Prince's bassinet enclosed by a screen of lattice-work. Peering through this golden grille the forty ladies saw the odd-faced little Queen lying on her bed, and at her side the Prince's lace-covered bassinet, which had been placed on a platform under a crimson canopy lined with white satin. Two court ladies in white rocked the cradle, while at its head sat the nurse with a red velvet cushion on which, at intervals, the infant was laid, and presented to its mother.

Though George III. had married Charlotte, it had seemed probable a year or two before that Lady Sarah Lennox, the Duke of Richmond's

sister, would have been mother to the future Prince of Wales, for George III. had admired that captivating child, Sarah Lennox, since he was thirteen, and as he grew, his love for her had grown with him. Sarah Lennox lived with her married sister at Holland House, and on summer mornings the youthful King would ride along the road that led to Hammersmith, and there in one of the fields he would see his morning goddess "in a fancied habit making hay." When she was seventeen the King had proposed to her, and she, having put an end to an engagement with Lord Newbattle, who had proved unsatisfactory, accepted, though without enthusiasm, and there ensued a private understanding that they were to marry. However, pressure was brought to bear on the King, and one day, to her surprise, Sarah Lennox heard he was going to marry, not her, but Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. Lovely Sarah in the hay was one thing, and small, mulatto-faced Charlotte with her long slit of a mouth was another; but the King had an overwhelming sense of duty and that carried him through.

Sarah Lennox's disappointed relations were surprised that she was not more upset, but her pet squirrel happened to be ill, and, such were her valuations, she was far more concerned over the squirrel's symptoms than over losing the King. Worldly disinterestedness could scarcely go further.

Once married to Charlotte, the King became much attached to her. He found in this child of

seventeen a completely devoted being who considered everything he said or did perfection. Her sense of duty emulated his. She twittered about doing small gracious acts, yet, when to be kind required imagination, she often failed completely. In so far as her sense of propriety allowed her mind to act she was fairly intelligent, and would sometimes say a quite good thing. "I am always quarrelling with time!" she remarked one day. "It is so short to do something, and so long to do nothing."

Life at court was most gentle and orderly. Not only was the King worshipped by his wife, but by his daughters, and the palace atmosphere was suffused with a very real and sweet affection. "I have you yet, I have you yet," the Queen, putting out her hand to her husband, kept murmuring the evening after an attempt had been made on his life. As long as his family had this attitude for the King all went well. Life at Kew and Windsor passed in a perpetual bowing and curtseying between the royal family and those around them. The right way of living was to the King's and Queen's mind evident and simple; so were the views their children must hold. Moral conduct, deference to superiors, punctual attendance at church: Milton was a good man, Voltaire a bad: the Tories were right, the Whigs were wrong: Mrs. Trimmer's writings for the young were admirable, and Uncle Cumberland's faro-table was abominable—it was all as clear as could be. This rigid demarcation between virtue and vice was a perpetual satisfaction

to the earnest-minded little Queen, and she was never happier than when drawing attention to it, whatever the occasion. When she gave a masked ball at Buckingham House in honour of the King's birthday, she arranged it should be an allegorical one so as to give herself scope for her pet theme, and when the evening arrived she had her husband " led into the drawing-room, from whence, the window-shutters being suddenly thrown open, he saw himself represented in a grand transparency, as giving peace to the world, surrounded by all the public and private virtues . . . whilst the vices of the day were trod beneath his feet."

Owing to the continuous influx of new babies at Kew (nearly one a year), the Palace, where the royal family lived, was soon fuller than it could hold, and the infantile overflow was lodged in a house on the Old Green. King, Queen, and children lived surrounded by a regular community of their attendants, all planted out in the small houses round them—governess, sub-governess, clerk-of-the-works, preceptor, riding-master, the King's gardener, the King's carpenter—one was in this cottage, one in that. It was a little, intimate world, green-leaved and peacefully eighteenth century, set on the lush banks of the Thames. " The road ran up the middle of the green between the royal houses . . ." writes Mrs. Papendick, who lived there, " and at the end stood a house in the gardens. . . . Between the gate to the water-side from the palace and the ferry was a house, also in

the gardens, appropriated to Lady Charlotte Finch, the royal governess. . . . By the ferry steps was still another house. . . . The small cottage next was fitted up with great rural neatness for Mrs. Pohl. . . . The Queen's flower garden was up the lane. . . . In this bijou of a garden were orange trees." . . . Almost, through the leaves, one can see the hooped skirts of the Queen as, early on some diaphanous summer morning, she moves among her orange trees. For the royal family's early morning energy was extraordinary. The riding-master, in his effort to keep up with it, would breakfast with his wife every morning at half-past four ; for at five, summer or winter, he had to be in readiness in the riding-school for the King.

On Sundays and Thursdays the public were allowed in part of the gardens at Richmond and Kew. "The Green on these days," says Mrs. Papendick, "was covered with carriages. . . . Their Majesties were to be seen at the windows speaking to their friends, and the royal children amusing themselves in their own gardens. Parties came up by water, too, with bands of music, to the ait opposite the Prince of Wales's house. The whole was a scene of enchantment and delight." If their subjects were fortunate they might, as the royal children gradually grew up, have even seen the whole family headed by the King and Queen processing two-and-two round the garden paths—for such, once a week, was their custom. George III. was an assiduously affectionate parent and, if

any of his children were ill, would come bustling across the Green before he went to the riding-school, softly tapping at their doors to ask how they were. His family early began to be initiated into what their position required of them, and when the Prince was only seven he held a child's drawing-room. He was assisted by the brother next him in age, Frederick, and also by a still smaller brother and sister. These last two, apparently being unable, owing to extreme youth, to stand upright for any length of time, were grouped on a sofa, dressed—such was the Queen's strange idea of appropriateness—in Roman togas.[1]

[1] The children of George III. and Queen Charlotte were :

George, Prince of Wales (later George IV.) (1762–1830).
Frederick, Duke of York (1763–1827).
William, Duke of Clarence (later William IV.) (1765–1837).
Edward, Duke of Kent (1767–1820).
Ernest, Duke of Cumberland (later King of Hanover) (1771–1851).
Augustus, Duke of Sussex (1773–1843).
Adolphus, Duke of Cambridge (1774–1850).
Octavius (1779–1783).
Alfred (1780–1782).

Charlotte (m. Frederick, later King of Würtemberg) (1766–1828).
Augusta (1768–1840).
Elizabeth (m. Landgrave of Hesse-Homburg) (1770–1840).
Mary (m. Duke of Gloucester) (1776–1857).
Sophia (1777–1848).
Amelia (1783–1810).

The royal family had little to do with society in an intimate way, but the King and Queen gave court parties and concerts, and in time made a few close friends: Lord and Lady Harcourt, for instance, Lady Charlotte Finch, and Lady George Murray. Lady George had been married at sixteen, and when widowed at thirty had at once had all her hair shaved off, and devoted the rest of her life to bringing up her family of ten children. That was the sort of record the King and Queen approved of, and Lady George was suitably rewarded by being made Lady-in-waiting to two of the Princesses. Apart from his punctilious attention to business, the King's great interests were his family, the programme for his private concerts, and long conversations with any intelligent men that came his way. Fanny Burney's diary during the time she was Dresser to the Queen takes us into the very centre of this domestic life; we are constantly meeting the King down the passages or coming in and out of the rooms at Kew or Windsor, scattering his good-humoured "What? What?" and chattering to every one he comes across with such genuine kindness that the long rays of his sympathy warm us as we read. But this good humour was for the orthodox and the virtuous only; beneath it lay the hardness of the man who, himself always putting duty before everything, has no leniency for those who do not.

He took immense trouble over the education of his sons; while the Queen shaped her daughters'

minds as nearly as possible to her own. The Princesses, six dove-like creatures bestowing smiles in all directions, breathed easily in this atmosphere, but the sons found it suffocating. In dealing with affairs of the country George III. imposed his own ideas regardless of advice, believing, quite sincerely, that it was the Almighty's wish that he should. He was equally despotic in the upbringing of his sons, and for some reason was determined to keep his eldest a child as long as possible. To a boy of George's temperament, bursting with animal spirits, and with a quicker intelligence than most of the grown-up people round him, this attitude of his father's meant misery. "See how I am treated!" he exclaimed one day to a servant, pointing to the childish collar he was made to wear. At the core of his being lay a terror of being made ridiculous and, conversely, a longing to impress, to make a display. And he possessed other feelings as well, very forceful ones; for this fresh-faced little boy trotting about the rooms at Kew and Windsor had within him enough explosive to wreck the serenity of both. Gradually the King began to be aware of this, aware that the whole trend of his son's disposition was almost diametrically the opposite to his own; and he was one of those unreasonable parents who demand that their sons shall be replicas of themselves. He urged his boys' tutors to reinforce their eight hours a day tuition by thrashing their pupils. "If they deserve it, let them be flogged," he adjured them. Not that George

objected to being educated—his voracious appetite for life made him ready for anything—but he detested being kept under, detested the assumption that he must inevitably share his father's opinions.

" Wilkes for ever !—No. 45 for ever ! " he kept yelling out one morning, beating on the panels of the door of his father's bedroom.[1] It was possibly this kind of incident that finally led the King to announce that he had come to the conclusion that his eldest son stood in no awe of him. This discovery was such a shock that he said it made him forget important business. Obviously, the only remedy was flogging : and the tutors flogged. In Amelia Murray's memoirs of the time she writes, " Princess Sophia told me once that she had seen her two eldest brothers, when they were boys of thirteen and fourteen, held by their tutors to be flogged like dogs with a long whip." Even the King himself occasionally tried to work off the annoyance he felt at not being a sufficiently respected parent by seizing the whip and lashing it across his sons' extremely solid bodies. But he and the tutors might exhaust themselves in their efforts : nothing could down George and Frederick. The thrum of youth was in their blood. As they grew, and entered their teens, their liveliness increased.

The Regent and his Daughter. 1932.

[1] It was in the forty-fifth number of the *North Briton* that Wilkes had criticized the King's speech.

XV

CATHERINE CARSWELL

THE EDUCATION OF A POET

[The following passage describes the birth and early education of Robert Burns. He was born in 1759 in the parish of Alloway in Ayrshire, the son of William Burns, a small farmer, very poor, who had been bred a gardener and was still anxious to set up a market garden when he had saved enough money.]

"HE's a fule wha marries at Yule," says a Scots proverb—" for when the bairn's to bear, the corn's to shear." But as yet, with his little seven acres, part to be dug for garden stuff and part left pasture for a dairy of two cows, William Burnes had happily no need to hearken to sayings made for farmers. Time enough for that. So he had married Agnes in mid-December. In any case their first child, a boy, was not born till thirteen months later.

The night of the birth coincided with a violent storm of wind and rain, through which the expectant father had to fight his way and ride the swollen Slaphouse ford for the midwife. It was

one of those births about which legends are told ; but the present narrative is not concerned with legends. The facts are enough. On January 26th —the morning after the birth—William, in spite of the weather, brought the parish minister from Ayr, and assembled for the baptism the needful witnesses, one of whom was his neighbour Tennant, a man younger than himself but already twice married and very fruitful. There was no custom to explain this haste. It was simply that William could not bear to wait one unnecessary hour for what he saw as the consummation of his life. The ceremony was performed in the kitchen, Agnes handing the infant to its father from the box bed, and he, after the Scottish fashion, holding it in his arms to be sprinkled, and uttering his vows aloud. Never did any man undertake with more eager solemnity the duties of Christian parenthood. Never was firstborn more sincerely dedicated to righteousness.

Day after day the gale continued. Along that coast such a wind could blow from the Atlantic that sometimes it uncovered the dead in their shallow, sandy graves. In this case, however, it was the newborn that it exposed. For ere dawn on the tenth day a gable of the cottage fell and laid the kitchen open to the elements. William had to carry his family through the wet and roaring darkness to the nearest house where hospitality could be sought without loss of dignity—for in a land of large families and two-roomed dwellings

it is no small favour to ask for a bed. Then in the inclement morning he went back alone, and set himself to repair the fault the west wind had discovered in his home. Clay and stone are ill to combine. The union between the humble substance of the wall and the ambitious fabric of the chimney had failed. The neighbours spoke their sympathy, but there was some smiling. William was undaunted. So solid was his week's rebuilding that it has stood through a hundred and ninety winters.

The child was thought to resemble his mother because he had her eyes and brows. But his hair was very dark, and his head unusually large. Being the eldest and a son, he was named after his paternal grandfather. So he was Robert Burnes. A second boy would have to be Gilbert, after Agnes's father. This Gilbert arrived a year later. He was followed in due season by two girls, Agnes and Annabella, named after their grandmothers in the correct way, precedence being given to the maternal side.

William Burnes never carried out his market gardening scheme, for before it was well begun a tempting offer prompted him to postpone his dream of complete independence. A new property owner in the neighbourhood, a friend of the Crawfords of Doonside, asked for his help. This was a Dr. Ferguson, an Ayshire man, who, like others of his nation, had practised medicine in London for many years and done pretty well.

Now he had come back to his native place to enjoy his money and to be Provost of Ayr. Two years before William's marriage he had bought thirty acres of farm-land, pleasantly situated and very fertile on the banks of the Doon, stretching from below the ruined church at Alloway all the way to Auchindrane. He had built himself a little mansion house, done away with the old farm names of Berriesdam and Warlockholm, and renamed his place Doonholm. All the time he kept adding to his possessions. First, part of the lands of Fauldhead and Whinknowe became his in an exchange deal with neighbour Crawford. Then the lands of South High Corton fell into his hands. Soon he had quite a good little property to leave to his dear eldest daughter Elizabeth, who was the apple of his eye. But throughout all his acquisitions Doonholm remained his home and his family seat, and he wished it to be laid out in the latest style as befitted his dignity. He wanted plantations, shrubberies, a fine garden, walks that would skirt the margin of the river, an avenue of those rare trees—elms. Would the well-spoken-of Burnes undertake the work of overseer and daily gardener at Doonholm ?

William could not refuse. He went out to work all day and every day for the Provost while Agnes managed the dairy, and he sold a third of his acres. He still cherished his dream, but husband and wife were peaceful, happy, solvent. And after all he was used to waiting.

For Agnes it was perfection—the brand new

house, so trim and convenient, and all her own ; her man in a fine job with the gentry who talked with him almost as if he were one of themselves ; boy babies and girl babies with bright intelligent eyes following her round ; her cows—there were as many as three of them sometimes—that she knew so well ; and just enough land to have everything under one's eye. She worked hard, holding to her maiden habit of never sitting still if she could help it. And as she worked she sang. Many of her songs had never been written down, others were from fleetingly printed strips picked from the barrows at Ayr or Maybole, or out of the pedlar's pack by Will Nelson and his like ; but since then they had passed so often from mouth to mouth that whole verses had been lost, and new verses added, and lines altered beyond recognition. All the tunes were old, subject to the variations of a hundred scattered singers, alive and dead. Agnes was a good song-carrier, her voice sweet and strong, her memory excellent. The children loved to listen to her, but none so much as Robert, whose appetite for song was never satisfied.

" Kissin' is the key o' love,
An' clappin' is the lock,
An' makin' o's the best thing
That e'er a young thing got."

That was one he often asked for. Another was an old chap-book ballad called " The Life and Age

of Man." It was one of those dirge-like songs loved by peasants because they voice the sadness of labour, and had been, as Agnes often told the children, greatly favoured by the poor old man, her uncle, who had been " long blind ere he died." He had liked nothing better than to sit, shedding tears with his sightless eyes, while she sang it to him. So for Robert it was more even than a song. It comprehended his granny's farm, which he had never seen, the blind man in his chair, the little hard-driven singing girl now his mother. And at the same time it transcended all these with its sighing refrain—

" Ah ! man was made to mourn ! "

But Robert himself could not sing. He tried—how the child tried !—with the violence of despair over his unaccountable, maddening failure. His mother did her best to teach him. But there it was. Though she could set the melody pulsing in him he could not release it. The rhythm was there. It was in his blood. But when he opened his mouth nothing came but unmeaning sounds. It was not that he could not distinguish each separate air. He could, even if they were hummed over without a word. But his baby sisters could sing a tune more correctly than he, and even Gilbert, who did not specially care for music, made a better showing.

When the boys began to go to school (which they did when Robert was still under six) their musical

incapacity proved a real source of affliction. Although two of the youngest children in the class—and the school was no more than a class—they won their way quickly to the top in most subjects. In particular they excelled in reading and in all memory-work. But when it came to singing the Psalms of David in metre they were the schoolmaster's despair. He plied the tawse unsparingly, but without results that could be called musical.

In the ordinary course the boys of a cottager would be hired out at eight or nine years old as day-labourers to a neighbouring farmer, or even as resident labourers to farmers at a distance. But William, like his father, had laid plans for his children on a more liberal scale than the district could provide. Moreover he still aimed at an independence that would keep his growing family together. For this, however, he would need control of considerable acres. Soon the cottage would have served its turn. He must sell it and find a small farm. It happened that Provost Ferguson had recently acquired a property of seventy "unimproved" acres and a steading, up the hill about two miles to the south in Stewart Kyle. William Burnes proposed for it. The rent was high—£40 a year for the first six years, and after that £45. But the Provost, who liked his gardener and knew that he would make the best of tenants, not only made no difficulties, but was willing to lend £100 on the security of the Alloway cottage for the stocking of the farm, and to give an option for

the renewal of the lease at the end of the term. William had inspected the place. It was not all he could have wished, but it was his chance. He signed the lease. The family went on living at Alloway—for no immediate purchaser of the cottage appeared. William went on spending his working hours at Doonholm. But in his spare time he began to plant little fruit trees beside the new house, and to clear the stony fields. He brought cart-loads of the best stones down to Alloway churchyard. With Tennant and others he had applied at Ayr for leave to rebuild the ruined walls, and had even raised a small subscription.

Of an evening he laboured over a theological manual he was compiling for the guidance of his children. He had begun this in Robert's infancy—if not before his birth—and had persevered in it with dogged patience ever since. It took the form of a dialogue between father and son, and was designed to convey those ideas of the Godhead and of human life which had exercised his mind as he dug and planted for other men's hire or sat on his obscure stool in the Edinburgh churches. He had the pride of authorship, the gravity of experience, the purity of faith. Unfortunately he was never able to escape from the unreadable jargon that was then the serious mode accepted even by men of respectable understanding. Not that this occurred to him as a drawback. What did trouble him was the poorness of his calligraphy and grammar, which made him more than ever anxious to improve upon

his own father's well-meant but defective provisions for learning. He felt qualified to teach his sons the work of a farm and to instruct them in the right conduct of life ; but if they were to have more book-learning than himself he must call in the services of another man.

The local school, which the children were now attending, did not satisfy him. It was two miles away at Alloway Mill, and the mill had embarrassing associations for William. Further, Mr. Campbell, the schoolmaster, was about to leave, making way for one said to be his inferior. In any case the children could learn little more there than William and his brothers had learned in the Clochanhill schoolhouse. Accordingly, soon after Robert's sixth birthday—about the time the lease of the farm was signed—William decided to have a schoolmaster of his own choosing near home. He had unfolded this scheme to four among the most intelligent of his neighbours and had won their support. John Tennant had a brother, David, who taught at Ayr Academy. Also the English master there, a Mr. Paterson, being a native of Kincardine, had condescended to allow " a certain degree of intimacy " between so worthy a man as Burnes and himself. On Sundays, after the morning service, he would even ask William and Agnes to step into his house for a short time ; and William and Agnes (and the children, who waited for them in the street) were sensible of the honour. Through Paterson and Tennant a likely dominie was sug-

gested, and one afternoon in early March William set out by himself for the burgh, having an appointment there with one John Murdoch, a very genteel young man who had but recently qualified as a schoolmaster.

Punctual to the hour, as it tolled from the "dungeon-clock" at the jail, William crossed the steep, narrow bridge into Ayr. The town had lately been robbed of its gates; but the "Auld Brig," though modern citizens were beginning to "condemn" it as unsafe, remained the only approach from the south side of the river. And at the north end stood Simpson's, a famous place for striking bargains. William rarely entered a tavern either in Ayr or anywhere else, but the meeting with Mr. Murdoch was a solemn matter that could not be managed otherwise. Murdoch, coming on his lighter foot from the town side, and passing between the high, gabled tenements with their turnpike stairs, went under cover along the main street because of the wooden balconies that thrust out from either side. He too was punctual to the striking of the dungeon-clock. It was his first encounter with a prospective employer. He was eighteen years of age, full of promise and pedantry.

From the moment of meeting Murdoch felt a warm reverence for this middle-aged, serious father. Later, when most of his life was lived, he was to declare that Burnes was "by far the best of the human race that ever he knew." Both men

were immediately at one in their worship of learning. Murdoch said that he was musical and had a *flair* for languages. It was his ambition to go some day to France, that he might learn to speak French with a perfect accent. Having been forewarned that he must bring with him a sample of his handwriting he laid it on the inn table to be scrutinized. The time had now come for Burnes to confide the affair of the *Manual of Religious Belief.* Till this was revised, he feared, and copied out in a fair hand, neither young nor old could profit by it. Could Murdoch include such a task with his duties as infant schoolmaster? Murdoch was sure he could. His calligraphy passed muster, and it would appear that he had specialized in the subject of English grammar. To come back to music, he was confident that he would be able to teach even Robert to sing the Psalms of David.

So it was settled. Murdoch was to come to Alloway, where he would be housed in turn with the Burneses and with the four other families whose children would attend daily at a room in the village to be instructed. Besides his keep he would be guaranteed a salary of about sixpence a day. Upon this satisfactory result a drink was ordered at the employer's expense, and drunk to the undertaking. Some six weeks later Murdoch walked over, bringing with him some clean shirts, a spelling-book, *Fisher's English Grammar*, Masson's *Collection of Prose and Verse*, a New Testament, and a new seven-thonged leather tawse.

The arrangement lasted for two years, and was a success. Incidentally it provided Robert and Gilbert with by far the longest spell of schooling they were to have. All later periods of formal education, when added together, were scarcely to equal one-third of their time under Murdoch. On both sides it was made the very most of, and there arose a considerable degree of liking, if not precisely of love, between master and pupils. Murdoch's was a likeable rather than a lovable character. He was above all an energetic teacher. Hustling his pupils through what they still lacked of the "elements," he soon had them busy paraphrasing, turning verse into prose, "substituting synonyms" and supplying "ellipses." Masson's enterprising *Collection* (Mr. Masson kept a school in Edinburgh on the most modern lines for the children of the gentry at 5s. a term) contained elegant extracts from a dozen or so of the greatest writers, from Shakespeare—dead—to Henry Mackenzie—much alive—and selected letters, "Moral and Entertaining," from Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe. Murdoch made the boys learn many of the passages by heart, which they easily did. He also tried, according to promise, to make them sing the Sternhold and Hopkins version of the Psalms. But here he failed, especially with Robert, even with the aid of the stinging new tawse. At length he was obliged to admit that Robert had "an ear remarkably dull, and a voice untuneable." The Dominie had nothing against thrashing as an aid

to learning, and he found himself oftener impelled to thrash Robert than the merrier and more docile Gilbert, who was from the first his favourite. It was not that Robert was slow or stupid. On the contrary—save in that one respect of sacred music—he seemed to his master to show almost as marked intelligence as his younger brother. He learned by heart even more readily than jolly little Gilbert, and rapidly became an adept at the favourite synonyms and ellipses. But there was a "stubborn something" in this thick-set little boy with the dangerous dark eyes that gave an adult pause and called for chastisement.

None the less, the Burnes boys were Murdoch's pet pupils, and he liked to stay in their "mud edifice," "argillaceous fabric," or "tabernacle of clay"—as in his rage for synonyms he alternatively called the cottage—better than in any of the neighbours' houses. While there, was he not accorded the full honours due to his learning? And was he not able to engage to the top of his bent in superior conversation? One day, in very different surroundings, he was to sit in princely company and give English lessons to Talleyrand, and other distinguished foreigners. But then he was also to be middle-aged and ill, a dram-drinking, disappointed man. He would never again be so greatly at peace with himself and the world as during these virtuous evenings by the Burnes fireside. Still in his teens he was deferred to by a man far older than himself, and looked up to by

clever children as the very fount of knowledge ; while that " very sagacious woman " his hostess, pausing between her endless duties, stood fascinated, uncomprehending, her warm glance travelling in admiration between his face and that of her wonderful husband. Talk at an end, he would slip complacently into the chaff bed, already warmed for him by the sleeping body of little Robert. For Robert was always his bedfellow.

The Life of Robert Burns. 1930.

XVI

A. J. A. SYMONS

THE RESCUE OF LIVINGSTONE

[This extract explains itself. It describes the expedition of Henry Stanley to discover David Livingstone, the missionary and explorer, believed to have perished in Central Africa.]

IN the January of 1871, when the German armies were encamped round Paris waiting for the city to surrender, and half Europe was trying to foresee the consequences of Napoleon the Third's downfall, a short, square-headed, self-confident young American, giving his name as Henry M. Stanley, disembarked from a small whaling brigantine at the island of Zanzibar, the principal trading-place of the east coast of Africa. He was accompanied by a Scottish navigator, one William Lawrence Farquhar, whom he had engaged for an undefined service a few months before, and Selim, an Arab boy from Jerusalem. The stranger's visiting-card gave the information that he represented the *New York Herald*, but what his particular business was no one was allowed to

know ; and, to questions concerning his destination, the bland answer was returned that he was travelling into Africa. So much was plain enough, for immediately upon arrival the new-comer set about arranging a caravan for journeying into the interior. Uncommunicative but energetic, he interrogated many Arab merchants concerning the hinterland and, under their direction, purchased those goods which, from the books of previous explorers, he knew would be necessary for his purpose. With a promptness and efficiency that surprised the Europeans resident in the island, he completed his arrangements within a month of his arrival and departed for the mainland with his plans still undisclosed, having added to his retinue William John Shaw, lately third mate of an American ship, and two dozen native soldiers or servants, including such survivors as he could find of those " Faithfuls " who had accompanied Burton and Speke to discover Tanganyika. From this it was deduced that his intentions were vaguely geographical.

A close observer might have deduced something of Stanley's character, as well as his intentions, even on that short acquaintance. Profound though the traveller's reserve was, it did not disguise his complete contempt for half-castes and for those who lacked the indomitable energy which he regarded as characteristic of Europeans and Americans. Nor did it hide a natural lack of humour, nor a slight but ever active suspicion of

his fellows. He seemed always on his guard. What his education had been, what his antecedents were, remained as much a mystery as his plans; but there was clearly something unusual, though not readily to be defined, about this man, so unaccountably indifferent to drink and the usual temptations. For the rest, his steady gaze and general bearing indicated a stable, strong-willed personality not easily disturbed or disconcerted; and he was obviously an experienced traveller and man of the world, possessed of good credit and great self-control.

At that time the methods of African exploration still closely followed those of the Arab traders—who were mostly slave-traders. It was necessary to carry rolls of cloth of various kinds and qualities, beads of several types and colours, and coils of brass wire, to exchange for sustenance with natives by the way and offer as tribute to chiefs through whose territory it was required to pass. To convey these goods, porters were needed; and to protect them, an armed bodyguard. It was in this manner that the young American proposed to proceed. He had obtained the bodyguard and the material for barter in Zanzibar; the porters, after some vexatious delays, were procured at Bagamoyo, the regular point of departure into the interior. Divided into five caravans in order to avoid the appearance of excessive wealth, the expedition began in mid-February to file away inland, with its destination

and purpose still unknown, even to the two white men who acted as its lieutenants. The young American had under his command 153 carriers, 27 donkeys, 2 horses, 23 soldiers, 8 odd men, and the two sailors; and carried 22 sacks of beads, 350 lbs. of brass wire, over 30,000 yards of cloth and sheeting, 2 boats and a cart, as well as tents, instruments, medicine, guns, pistols, swords, daggers, spears, axes, and knives.

It was well said in the 'eighties of the last century that "a wheel at present would be as great a novelty in Central Africa as a polar bear." The unit of transport was the human foot, and this variously laden expedition, with all its equipment in bundles on the heads of its porters, followed the native paths—one of the astonishments of Africa, which, though seldom more than ten inches wide, were worn by centuries of traffic to the hardness of a metalled road, and formed a network unsurpassed even in civilized countries.

But, despite these remarkable footpaths, which linked village to village and tribe to tribe, Stanley's task, even to reach the first rendezvous he had arranged for his five caravans, was not an easy one. Many of the native chiefs proved far more extortionate in their demands for tribute than had been anticipated. From the first desertions were numerous, for a principal inducement in the minds of native porters when joining such an expedition was the hope of running away as soon as possible with as much as could be carried.

Moreover, Arab raiders, owing to their possession of firearms, had for years devastated the interior of Africa in the quest for slaves and ivory; consequently, even near the coast, the natives were resentful or likely to be actively hostile to strangers and travellers. Further, the coast belt of country was saturated with malaria, and it was not long before all the three whites of the party went down with fever. To make matters worse, the march was begun just before the rainy season; the path led through the Makata valley, which was converted by the weather to a thirty-mile swamp in which the heavily laden porters had to wade waist-deep for hours at a time, trying to keep their balance, and the burdens on their heads dry. Both the horses and many of the donkeys died; the specially made cart had to be thrown away. Finally Farquhar fell mortally ill, and though Stanley gathered from his medical book that his assistant was suffering from either heart, liver, or kidney disease, unfortunately he could not tell which.

Nevertheless this American newspaper representative kept his force in hand. Balzac, who admired will so much, would have approved the power of self-command with which he forced himself, even when tired and sick, to march and to make his men march. His methods were firm-handed, for during his thirty-one years of life he had been taught time and again, under many skies, the efficacy of force. Recalcitrant porters

soon found that their short, amiable-looking leader was not a man to be trifled with; he noted in his journal that "when mud and wet sapped the physical energy of the lazily inclined, a dog-whip [upon] their backs restored them to a sound—sometimes to an extravagant—energy." Indeed, later upon the march, when the desertions began to endanger his safety, Mr. Stanley borrowed a slave-chain from an Arab caravan which for a time had accompanied his, and did not hesitate to use it. Difficulties which would have overwhelmed lesser men left him undismayed. This side of his temperament can be judged by his cool observation: "Though the water has a slimy and greenish appearance, and is well populated with frogs, it is by no means unpalatable." Three months after its start from Bagamoyo the expedition arrived at its first resting-place, Unyanyembe, 350 miles from the coast.

But distance cannot always be measured in terms of time or mileage. Those first three months, and 350 miles of travel inland, were to Stanley his African apprenticeship, and they left him separated by metaphorical years from the man who had set out on the secret mission. With neither of his white companions could he keep in close touch; they were in charge of separate caravans while he brought up the rear. As week after week he left civilization farther behind, he was more and more thrown upon his own company and resources. This self-dependence, which

might have demoralized a weak nature, worked very otherwise with him. It produced "a delightful tranquillity" in his soul to be free of European trammels; not to care what Governments stood or fell, what the news of Courts and cities was. Every day brought its new experience and its new problems, in the solution of which the whole man was concentrated. To be independent of criticism, safe from possibility of ridicule, and free to grapple with events; to be not only his own master but also the master of others; this life, despite the heat, malaria, and various trials of Africa, suited Stanley. He grew and hardened.

Yet there remained a sharp lesson for him to learn in Unyanyembe. The path west was blocked by a war which broke out between the Arabs and a native chief, Mirambo. Thinking by his intervention to decide the issue quickly, Stanley joined his arms to the Arabs and marched with them in what was expected to be a campaign of easy victory. The event proved quite the contrary; the out-generalled Arabs were badly defeated in the first engagement and bolted for safety without warning to Stanley, who was nearly captured. Meanwhile, Farquhar, who had been left ailing from that undefined complaint in the care of a friendly native chief, had died; and Shaw, listless and apathetic, seemed likely to follow him. The closing of the western road forced Stanley to recast his plans; and, to hearten his remaining lieutenant, he now disclosed to him

the real purpose of their mission. It was the seeking out and relief of David Livingstone.

How the relief of Livingstone, the most famous of all African travellers, and the first European to cross the continent from side to side, had become the charge of an American journalist is a story in itself. Five years earlier the missionary-explorer had set out to resolve the problem of the watershed between the Nyassa and Tanganyika lakes. A few months after his departure, Musa, the chief of his porters, reached the coast with a handful of men and the news of his master's death. It appeared that the expedition had crossed Lake Nyassa and was pushing west into dangerous country when it encountered a mixed band of hostile natives. Livingstone, a fast walker, was ahead of his baggage-laden troop, accompanied only by a few followers; so that when three assailants closed with him his skull was cleft by an axe-blow from behind after he had shot down two of the savages in front. The body was found by the porters later, and Musa related that the murderers had respected the missionary in death by leaving his trousers! Leaderless, the survivors fled, and after interesting vicissitudes reached safety and the coast.

An account so circumstantial was naturally believed, and caused widespread sorrow, for African exploration was to the nineteenth century what the conquest of the air is to the twentieth —a demonstration of invincible human spirit.

Sir Roderick Murchison, however, the President of the Royal Geographical Society, was unconvinced ; and so constant were his criticisms of the murder-story that a boat expedition was sent in 1867 by way of the Zambezi to discover whether or not Musa had lied. On the return of this search-party, Edward Daniel Young, who commanded it, was able to say with certainty that Musa had lied, and that though the expedition had not been able to reach Livingstone, the explorer was undoubtedly *not* murdered by the Mazitu, nor by any other tribe, at the place named by Musa, but had gone on in safety far beyond. The truth was that the porter and his companions, after deserting their leader, had invented the fable of his death to account for their own reappearance. Indeed, in 1868, delayed letters from Livingstone himself attested his well-being and his wants. He was anxious to explore an unvisited lake farther inland and link up the river-sources he had discovered with the Nile, seven hundred miles away. To do this he needed sheeting, cloth, and beads for barter, and some new shoes. For some time thereafter vague rumours that he was still living in difficulties near the lake filtered through to Zanzibar and so to Europe, but no more was heard directly from the distant explorer, and it was widely assumed that after all, in one way or another, he had met his death. Such faint reports as reached the Press indicated that he had married an African princess and settled

down in the wilds ; that he was a prisoner ; and that he was mad.

In view of this uncertainty, James Gordon Bennett, Jr., manager of the *New York Herald*, a journal which at that time made a speciality of "sensations," conceived the notion of sending out an expedition on behalf of his newspaper which should settle any doubt of Livingstone's survival by personal contact. His motives were admittedly less philanthropic than enterprising ; and the announcement, only made when his emissary Stanley was well inland, that an American newspaper had sent its special correspondent to relieve the famous English missionary, was displeasing to British pride and raised an unexpected hornets' nest about Bennett's ears. Jealous rival editors affected disbelief that any such expedition existed ; others consoled themselves with the thought that it was bound to fail. Livingstone's friends in London were startled into action, and an appeal was made to the English Government for funds to fit out an expedition. On the refusal of this proposal, the Royal Geographical Society opened a subscription, with the aid of Livingstone Relief Committees in various centres, and a substantial sum of money was secured for the purpose of carrying out the plan which Bennett had had the temerity to devise. Meanwhile, both Bennett and Stanley were denounced as humbugs who were attempting to gain notoriety at the expense of a great man.

These developments were, of course, unknown to Stanley as, far away in Africa, sitting needle in hand after his defeat by Mirambo, he disclosed the nature of his commission, and its probable consequences, to the sailor Shaw, dilating with fervour upon the fame and reward that waited if they could accomplish the task. But Shaw did not share his leader's vision; his strength was failing, and not even the strong punch of sugar and eggs seasoned by spice and lemons with which Stanley seconded his arguments could make his enthusiasm lasting. A few days later he begged in tears to be allowed to return, and left the expedition, to die.

Stanley was a man of very different composition. If he could not effect his purpose with Shaw he would do it without. From Arab reports it appeared probable that Livingstone had returned to Ujiji, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika; and Stanley determined to make a flying march thither with a few followers, circling the country controlled by Mirambo, and leaving the greater part of his stores behind. It was a manœuvre he was to repeat later in life with less success; this time his luck held. During the march he had some trouble with his followers and was so heavily blackmailed by the chiefs of Uhha that he chose to leave the path and make a new way through the jungle to avoid their villages and their demands; but the day came, with no grave intervening mishap, when he saw, between trees, and

flanked by blue-black mountains, the silver shield of Tanganyika. Burton, Speke, and Livingstone were the only Europeans known to have seen it before him. Thence to Ujiji was a step. The Stars and Stripes was unfurled; and volley after volley fired into the air by the jubilant travellers announced to the Arabs, Wangwana, Warundi, Waguhha, Wanyanyuema and the rest of the miscellaneous inhabitants that a caravan had arrived. The salute of Livingstone's servant from amid the crowd assured Stanley that he had successfully accomplished his quest; and with a wildly beating heart, and rapid, sanguine hopes, he proceeded impassively down the living avenue of onlookers to the semicircle of Arabs, with whom stood a pale and weary European, grey-moustached, and dressed in a red-sleeved waistcoat, tweed trousers and a bluish naval cloth cap with a faded gold band round it. Walking deliberately up, with characteristic self-control Stanley lifted his hat and offered a salutation that became famous: "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" "Yes," was the reply. "I thank God, doctor, I have been allowed to see you," Stanley continued. Livingstone answered that he was thankful to be there to offer welcome, and then, after introducing the new-comer to the Arabs, led him to the veranda of his house. Two hundred and thirty-six days had passed since Stanley started from Bagamoyo.

H. M. Stanley. 1933.

XVII

EDITH OLIVIER

A READER IN FRENCH

[This tragi-comic story is an episode from the life of Alexander Cruden, later famous as the author of a Concordance of the Bible. The son of a Scottish merchant, he was educated at Marischal College, Aberdeen, where he aspired to become a master. But a mental breakdown, brought on by an unhappy love-affair, made this impossible, and several years before the story related here he had migrated to the south, where he had eked out a living as a private tutor.]

It was, however, a precarious business to secure an unbroken succession of private tutorships ; and by 1726 Alexander was settled in London correcting proofs of classical and learned books, many of which were written by those French Protestant refugees to whom he was always an ardent friend. As a proof-corrector he was meticulously precise and careful, and his living was assured ; but the future looked dreary. He recoiled at the thought of a life entirely given up to this uninspiring and exacting occupation.

Then a wonderful thing happened. The Rev. Mr. Maddox, one of the Bishop of Chichester's chaplains, suggested to him that he should come down into Sussex as Reader in French to Lord Derby. Cruden's eyes were dazzled at the prospect of this grand position. Mr. Bull, the Earl's Chaplain, told him that it was so dignified as to be "as it were in a station at Court," and Alexander quite agreed. It was wonderful, too, to look forward to the quiet and scholarly life which seemed opening before him, and to the hours spent alone with a peer in the great library of the noble house, when the silence would only be broken by the sound of his own voice flowing on and on. Such a monologue would recall the lecture-rooms of Marischal College, now for ever closed to him; or the Sunday mornings in St. Nicholas's Church at Aberdeen when the little boys sat below the pulpit, attentively following the sermon on which they were to present their themes at the Grammar School in the afternoon.

Perhaps Mr. Maddox did not know, when he recommended Cruden for the post of French Reader, that, although he understood the language sufficiently well to make a most reliable proof-corrector, yet he had not the least idea of its pronunciation. He read it aloud letter by letter, spelling each word as though reading for the press, and the effect must have been quite unbearable. Certainly Cruden never gave a thought to this idiosyncrasy of his, as he hopefully set off for

Sussex early in June 1729. It was a few days after his thirtieth birthday. A bright vista opened before him.

Lord Derby was in residence at Halnaker Castle, which had come to him through his wife, the only child of Mr. William Morley, one of whose ancestors had bought the house from Queen Elizabeth. Eight hundred deer scampered about in the spacious park, which was more than four miles round, and Alexander was greatly impressed by the mansion which was to be his home. Truth to tell, it was a shapeless, rambling place, which had been a fortified castle in the Middle Ages. In the time of Henry VIII. the house belonged to Lord de la Warr, and he added a fine sixteenth-century wing containing a lofty long gallery approaching the Chapel, which was far larger than an ordinary parish church. He lined the walls of the great mediæval hall with elaborate panelling, and he filled its windows with richly coloured glass. Lord Derby thought all this was unpleasantly Gothic, and as, like most of the noblemen of his day, he was an amateur of architecture, he modernized the living-rooms on one side of the house, building a library in the classical manner, and filling it with pictures and statuary bought for him in Italy by his protégé Mr. Winstanley.

Cruden rode post to Halnaker, which was rather more than sixty miles from London, and he delighted in his journey, which took him across Clapham Heath and past the ruined Palace of

Nonesuch (" some time a stately house of the kings "). Epsom was a fashionable watering-place, and it amused him to see the smartly dressed ladies and gentlemen going to the well. A few miles beyond this, the road through Honey Lane was so bad that he had to turn off and cut through a copse, which eventually led him to a ford, where he crossed the Arun River. Up the hill to Arundel he climbed, and then he looked down upon " the fair wooden bridge " spanning the broad river, on which he saw riding ships of a hundred tons. He left the town by Mackerel's Bridge, and passed the Half-way Tree, and seven miles later he saw the great domain of Halnaker stretching away to his right.

Cruden rode across the park and under the great gateway which opened into the courtyard. He went into the house and was led through seemingly unending corridors, paved with stone and resounding with long empty echoes. About them hung the faint and very individual scent of still-rooms. Distant doors closed with unfamiliar thuds. He passed an enormous kitchen filled with cooks and turnspits, maids and men. They were chattering and laughing together, and then suddenly they all became silent. Cruden peered through the door and saw, high up in the wall, a square window at which there now stood a stout lady. She was the housekeeper, calling her instructions to the crowd below; but Cruden thought she must be the Countess herself. He continued on his way,

observing with approval the many servants, both male and female, whom he met in the corridors. Alexander had a high opinion of the peerage, and it pleased him that a nobleman should live in the grandeur befitting his station. The sight of all this dignity, even in the servants' quarters of the house, seemed in some way to add to his own. He was now a member of this great household; and the thought, though it made his heart beat faster (for he was a humble little fellow enough), also gave him a new importance. He held his head very high when he passed the maidservants. This was not snobbery, which implies a society that admits of climbing. Such a conception was completely alien to Cruden, for whom classes were as distinct as castes, and who looked on a peer as a being from another world. But in this dignified outer world there were quiet corners for men of humbler breed, and in one of these corners Alexander saw himself on the way to being established.

The echoing corridors led him to the comfortably furnished room of Mr. Frederick, Lord Derby's steward. This gentleman received him courteously, though plainly he was not an educated man after the standards of Marischal College and the Grammar School at Aberdeen. However, Alexander and he talked together pleasantly enough, until they were interrupted by the entrance of another and more important-looking personage. Mr. Frederick rose to his feet, and Cruden followed his example. He

was presented, and he murmured humbly that he was "honoured to be entering your lordship's service." But the new-comer was not Lord Derby. He was the major-domo, Mr. Clayton, come to talk business with Mr. Frederick. He ordered Alexander to be shown his room, where he promised to visit him later in the evening, and Cruden was led out again into those long cool passages. He found a large, pleasant room awaiting him, and to his joy it contained a number of books in peaceful brown leather bindings. He had taken one from the shelf, and was studying it by the window, when Mr. Clayton fulfilled his promise and entered the room.

The book which Alexander had in his hand was a History of England by Rapin Thoyras, and Mr. Clayton now took it from him and turned to the title-page. It was printed at The Hague, and this gave an opening for the conversation of the two men. Cruden was ingenuously pleased to display his learning and his views on politics and religion. Mr. Clayton did not say much, but he drew Alexander out to speak of his hero William of Orange and his victories over the French. He said that he looked upon William as the saviour of religion, and upon the Protestant succession as "the security through God of these nations from Popery and slavery."

Mr. Clayton then asked Cruden about his education, and he heard much about Marischal College and the advantages of being born in Aberdeen.

Alexander enjoyed speaking of his home, and Mr. Clayton was sympathetic and let him talk. They found themselves talking of the disturbances in the Fifteen and of the short-lived triumph of the "rebels," when Episcopalians had preached in the Presbyterian pulpits, while Jacobite soldiers swaggered in the houses of good Protestant citizens like Bailie Cruden. That, said Alexander, would have been a hard time for any one who had not faith to know that the Lord of Hosts was always on the Presbyterian side and that the triumph of the wicked could last only for a short while. So he talked, while Mr. Clayton listened, wondering at the choice made by the Bishop of Chichester's Chaplain. At last they parted for the night; Cruden happy at having been allowed to say so much, and Mr. Clayton dissatisfied, for though he never said much about his views, he was a High Churchman and a Tory. The ardent Cruden struck him as a dangerous firebrand.

The next day was Sunday. Mr. Clayton and Mr. Frederick left for London, but not before Mr. Clayton had reported to Lord Derby the impression he had received of the French Reader's religious and political views. The aristocratic Lord Derby was not an enthusiast. He had no desire for religious controversies in his household, nor did he wish particularly to harbour an anti-Episcopalian. He only required the services of an efficient reader in French. So that day, when Mr. Maddox came to see him after the afternoon service, he somewhat

quizzically inquired whether the cleric's protégé was one of those Aberdonians who had so mercilessly persecuted the members of the Episcopal Church. That sort of thing would not do at Halnaker. The Bishop's Chaplain was as unprejudiced as Lord Derby himself. It mattered not to him how many heads were broken in Aberdeen, so long as he was allowed to remain a Latitudinarian in Sussex. He assured Lord Derby that Cruden " had a just sense of religion, but was the enemy of bigotry and persecution," and he advised him to see for himself the gentle young man who had entered his household. Lord Derby admitted that he had heard from Mr. Frederick that Cruden seemed to be a quiet person enough, modest and well-behaved. He said that he would not invite his Reader to have supper with him, lest the young man should take it as a precedent, which would be a bore ; but he promised to see him later in the evening.

While all this was passing behind Alexander's innocent back, he himself was spending the Sunday in the manner in which he had been brought up. He went to church, and he prayed and read the Bible for many hours in his room. He dined with Mr. Bull the Chaplain, and he had supper in his own room " with attendants and other things suitable to so great a family." This pleased him. He received these attentions with dignity, and when the servants had left him, he settled down to a religious book. A knock on the door dis-

turbed him. His lordship's footman had been sent to desire Mr. Cruden's presence in the library.

Lord Derby was sitting in his chair, and he looked up with a friendly smile when his reader was announced. He was a man of sixty-five, and he held himself with such dignity, that even though he remained seated, he seemed to Alexander to be standing erect. His high forehead, his arched eyebrows, his large aquiline nose, and his massive chin combined to give his countenance an air of great dignity, which was increased by his full-bottomed wig and the rich sombre colour of his velvet coat. He had been a soldier in his youth, and his manner retained something of the martinet; but he was also a man of taste, who had retired from his various Court appointments in order to enjoy his books and pictures, and to have more time to spend in the grounds of Halnaker which he was for ever improving. He had spent some of his early years in Flanders fighting the French with the then Prince of Orange; and, after the gentlemanly fashion of the day, he had made a large number of friends in the enemy's camp. He liked the French language and spoke it well. He also shared the opinion of many of his contemporaries that the literature of France was the model for the civilized world. Reading at night was a troublesome business. Three hands were required to hold the book, the candle, and the reading-glass, for Lord Derby's eyes were not so good as they had been. He wanted a young man to keep him in

touch with the latest French books, without undue strain upon his own eyesight.

And now the Reader found by Mr. Maddox stood before him. He was a quiet-looking enough little fellow, dressed very soberly, although with some elegance in the cut of his coat. Alexander had lived almost entirely indoors since he had found work as a proof-corrector, and his skin was very pale, but his eyes were striking. They shone in the sallow face.

He bowed deferentially; and Lord Derby inclined his head with a combination of dignity and good fellowship. He liked the look of this funny little man.

He opened the conversation by saying genially that he feared that Cruden must have had a very poor supper, to which Alexander replied that on the contrary he had "supped extraordinarily well." They did not talk for long, and Cruden was soon asked to read the news. This he did successfully, but then followed Lord Derby's first experience of the linguistic powers of his French Reader. Alexander was given a French book, and the unhappy listener heard the words spelt out one by one after Cruden's extraordinary manner of reading French. Lord Derby's manners were perfect. Alexander had no idea of the effect that he had made. He was not troubled to read for long, but was soon sent off to bed completely satisfied with the day's work.

Mr. Maddox assured Lord Derby that Cruden

would master the difficulties of pronunciation in a very short time ; but, in spite of this encouragement, Lord Derby was in no hurry to give him another opportunity of showing his powers. He was not well, and he did not send for his Reader. Alexander therefore spent some quiet days enjoying the comforts of Halnaker and the society of Mr. Bull the Chaplain.

Then came a proud and happy day when Lord Derby was well enough to take a drive in his chaise. Cruden was instructed to go to the stables and there to find a horse on which to ride beside the chaise. He says that one of his lordship's best horses was saddled for him, and, mounted upon this, he posted himself " near the summer house " to wait for his patron. Lord Derby did not at first see him standing there under the trees, but he soon inquired for him, and then Cruden rode up. Together they now set out on one of those deliciously indolent and pleasant rambles which the country gentlemen of the eighteenth century had turned into a fine art. Their parks were laid out entirely with a view to these excursions. The walks led from vista to vista, and classical casinos crowned every point of vantage. Cruden got off his horse and walked beside the chaise through " a curious wilderness " which was one of Lord Derby's chief prides, while his lordship himself pointed out its beauties to his Reader.

Once more Alexander mounted his horse to ride beside the chaise, " the rest of his inferior attendants

being before or behind him." Thus they reached the top of the highest hill on the estate, where there was a windmill commanding a wonderful view. Lord Derby remained in the chaise, but he sent Cruden to the top of the mill with the miller, who brought a telescope through which could be seen " a prospect of the downs of Sussex, the sea, the Isle of Wight, and Spithead where His Majesty's men-of-war were then anchored." Alexander was convinced that there could be no more glorious view in the country, and Lord Derby liked his enthusiasm. Cruden was supremely happy. His master was making a friend of him, and " Mr. Clayton and Mr. Frederick were then at London, so there was no one to interpose."

But alas ! they returned on the following Sunday, travelling, as it seemed, always on that day expressly to shock Cruden's Scottish susceptibilities. He had now been at Halnaker a fortnight, and never, since that first evening, had he been called upon to read French. In spite of Lord Derby's stately courtesy, he might have guessed that all was not going well ; but he had no suspicion. It did not occur to him that he probably had not been engaged only to take a very occasional walk beside his lordship's chaise in the park, or to spy through the miller's glass at the men-of-war anchored off Spithead. He was happy, and therefore, like a child, he believed that Lord Derby was as happy as he was.

As Cruden was on his way to church at Chichester on that Sunday morning, he met " Lord Clayton "

(as he ironically called him) and Mr. Frederick returning from London. They exchanged greetings in a friendly manner, but then, as Alexander says, " a shyness began." He asked Mr. Bull if he could explain this ; and the Chaplain advised him not to air his opinions too freely in the presence of Mr. Clayton, whose education and whose views were very unlike his own. But this was not the point. Only a knowledge of the French language could have preserved for Alexander his position at Halnaker.

Lord Derby was one of those agreeable men who disliked being bored, and nothing can well be more boring than to hear a French book spelt aloud. The prospect of personally dismissing Cruden was also a boring one, although Lord Derby did not yet know how particularly boring his Reader could prove himself in such circumstances. But the business of dismissing the Reader was obviously more appropriate to one of his lordship's upper servants than to himself, and the task was allotted to Mr. Frederick. It was discussed during a chaise drive, when he and Mr. Bull and Mr. Clayton were all with his lordship. Later on Mr. Bull unwisely reported a good deal of this conversation to Cruden, probably hoping to soften the blow of his dismissal. No doubt Mr. Clayton did say : " But he is a rank Presbyterian " ; and no doubt Lord Derby then spoke kindly of his Reader, for he was well disposed towards him, and didn't care whether he was a Presbyterian or not.

But whatever Cruden's religious views might be, Lord Derby was determined to listen to no more of his French reading, and Mr. Frederick accordingly gave the *coup de grâce* on July the 7th.

He did it as kindly as he could, telling Alexander that he was agreeable to his lordship in every way except in his pronunciation of French ; but that, as his position in the household was solely that of French Reader, dissatisfaction with him in that capacity meant that he could not stay. Cruden dared not force himself unsummoned into the presence of his master, but that afternoon he sent Lord Derby the first of a series of letters written in a style with which his lordship was afterwards to become unpleasantly familiar.

Alexander lamented that his " tender parents " would suffer " great affliction and disappointment " when they heard of their son's discharge from his " honourable and pleasant service," and he refused to accept his dismissal as final. " The method I propose for attaining the French pronunciation exactly," he said, " is to fly to London, and for some time to be under a good French master." This sad and humble letter also contained a veiled threat, for Cruden informed Lord Derby that, in order to justify his giving up his work as a proof-corrector, Mr. Maddox had given him " full satisfaction that he should be engaged a year at least."

The letter had no effect, and two days later Cruden left Halnaker for London, where, he says,

" floods of water ran from his eyes both in his bed and out of his bed."

He took lodgings with some " good religious French people," who promised that he would be able to read French perfectly in a week's time. He went to the French Protestant Church. He had lessons from a French master. He dined in a French eating-house. On the 15th of July he was writing to Lord Derby: " I am *incognito.* The people of the house took me for a Jesuit. I was obliged to convince them of the contrary to make their minds easy. Being in my travelling wig, they said, ' *Il est étranger.*' "

In his letters he strung together French and English words in an astonishing jumble designed to show Lord Derby what progress he was making. He addressed him as " My noblest and dearest lord," or as " Most noble and most dear *Père* "; and he signed himself " Your most devoted, most obedient, most faithful, and most affectionate distressed humble servant," or as " *Votre très-dévoté, très-obéissant,* and *très-humble serviteur et fils, L'Étranger.*" He also gave Lord Derby the disturbing intelligence that " the near relation *l'Éternel* has brought me into to your lordship *par adoption* obliges me from duty as well as affection not to neglect writing to you by every post." He says that Mr. Bull had told him that " his lordship said I was as civil and quiet a man as ever came about an house. That you could not be displeased with Mr. Maddox for recommending one agreeable to

you in every way except the pronunciation of the French language. Poor man ! You was sorry for him, for you believed he thought himself extreamly happy."

When these letters arrived by every post, Lord Derby must have begun to feel displeased after all with Mr. Maddox, who had introduced this untiring correspondent to his establishment.

As time went on, Cruden's letters became more bitter. He began to harp on Mr. Clayton's enmity to him, saying that it was " no secret in Sussex " that when a " certain person " spoke against him, " your lordship stood up for me and had the better of him." And still " *Des fleuves* and *des rivières de larmes coulent de mes yeux, et je continue d'apprendre de plus en plus la langue française. . . . Mon exil me paraît fort long, et j'espère que le heureux moment approche quand j'aurai l'honneur et félicité d'être avec vous et vous servir.*"

Even these instances of Alexander's progress in the French language extracted no response from Lord Derby. Could it be that he did not even open the letters which arrived for him by every post ?

The Eccentric Life of Alexander Cruden. 1935.

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