

Fragments of an Autobiography¹

Edward Hutton²

I was born the eldest of seven children on April 12th 1875, a Victorian, at Castlebar, Ealing, an eight months child and so small that the story is that I was put in a cigar box, christened in a hand basin and given the name of Edward which he particularly disliked because my Father thought I could not possibly live.

I can remember nothing of the house except the tallow crocuses in the front drive and the big dead tree over the wall that made me afraid; for before I was four years old my father took a house at Hampstead for the sake of the Heath for his children, 7 Heathfield Gardens later 13 Cannon Place opposite the vicarage of Christ Church, where the Rev. E.H. Bickersteth was vicar. He was to become a great friend of my Father and Mother.

My Father James Edward Hutton was born in Sheffield January 24 1838. He and his younger brother Herbert were partners in the family business William Hutton and sons Manufacturing Silversmiths, Platers and Cutlers of London, Sheffield and Birmingham founded by my great grandfather William Hutton. My Father married my Mother, his second wife, in 1874 at St. Mary's Church in Bridgewater Somerset where she was born, christened, confirmed and married.

When I was seven years old I was put to school at Mrs. Coghlan's in Thurloe Road, Rosslyn Hill and was soon joined by my younger brother Robert. Our nurses delivered us at the school and fetched us away. We used to be allowed hoops, at first of wood but later of iron to trundle along the pavements of what was still little more than a village or small township. I learned to read there without difficulty and even began the Latin grammar.

Mrs. Coghlan was an elderly lady who was crippled. She wheeled herself about in a wheeled chair which she drove with her hands. She did not teach. The governesses were her daughter and a Miss Turner whom I loved. The school was of course mixed, boys and girls were taught together. Mr. Coghlan who suddenly appeared one day, a large bearded man we had never seen before, frightened me unwittingly by telling us that icebergs had escaped from the North Pole and were coming south and that it was a bad prospect. It turned out he meant for the summer. But in those days the summers seemed endless and hot and the winters endless too and filled with frosts and snow. Especially I remember when I was five in 1880-1 the snow lay very deep in the roads; and there were many later in which we went skating on the Whitestone Pond and sometimes in the Vale of Heath, tobogganning on the Heath in charge of Tom Jeffs the bootboy who made us a sledge.

Our nurses were Annie Wain a very tall and thin outwardly serene woman of about forty with a rather rugged face common in nurses, and little Annie. To begin with there was a very broad perambulator in which my brother and I sat side by side when we were taken for "a walk". At meals in the nursery Annie Wain, "nurse", sat at the head of the table and insisted on "proper" behaviour. We had what seems to me now the most delicious food; pea soup such as I never get now, made of dry peas, thick and tasty, Irish stew with thick gravy, large sirloins with rosy undercuts, jelly beloved of all children. For tea we would have dripping toast. I never even hear of it today. We loved it. But we had to eat the bread and butter first which was rather thick and stodgy. "Now Master Eddie you finish up your bread and butter. Eat it up! No jam till that is

¹ The hand-written manuscript and the typed manuscript with EH's annotations are both in the Hutton Collection in the Archive of the British Institute of Florence. Thanks to Peter Miles, grandson of Cecil Lomer Miles, the brother of Edward Hutton's wife Charlotte, for transcribing the material.

² Gaps in the text signalled by a line surrounded by square brackets are gaps that were left by EH. Question marks surrounded by square brackets signal undecipherable words or phrases.

gone” and I would get a tap on the back of my hand from a hot teaspoon. When our small sister the youngest of the family used to get into a tantrum and defy the lot of us Annie used to say “Leave her be”. Annie only left us years later to nurse her mother when we were more or less free of her care, and Mrs. Vine came to us as nurse-housekeeper.

Dear Annie Wain nursed me devotedly through scarlet fever at the risk of her life. Once or twice as a treat she was allowed to take us to visit her parents at Woolwich. Her father worked in the Arsenal and would show us “gatling guns” being made and give us steel shavings. And he took us over the great warship H.M.S. Benbow then on the docks. It was a great adventure to us as we had to go by train from Hampstead Heath station to Broad Street, change there and go on to Woolwich.

Then when we went away for a month for the summer holiday a bus would come to take us to the station into which we piled with our nurses and mountains of luggage including a tin bath on top. We went to Herne Bay, Westgate-on-Sea, Southwold, Sheringham. I remember at Sheringham it was so cold in August we sat down to meals in overcoats. Once we went to Barmouth, a very long journey and climbed Cader Idris with my Father. We were older then. But he preferred a place where he could sail such as Southwold. There was Mr. Bloggs who had a cutter. We would all go with my Father but he was the only one who enjoyed it, as we were always sea-sick and very sorry for ourselves. Yet we never refused to go, but always joined him. It really was his sole pleasure. He played no games except to teach us cricket; he was wrapped up in his family and his business. It was before the days of golf.

Then on our return the bus would meet us at the station and as it made its way to Hampstead, on Roslyn Hill, some wretched “down and out”, half in rags, seeing the pile of luggage on the bus would start to run beside it breathless in order to earn a shilling in helping unload the luggage. In vain we would wave him off, horrified at his struggle to keep up. He would arrive at the house exhausted only to be told to “be off”.

Then there were the cook and housemaids. I recall little of them except one dark morning their coming into Nurse’s room while we were still lying in next door. There was a long whispering with Nurse in which we caught a word now and again, one of which was “murder” and another “the Ripper”. But I do recall cook roasting the Sunday joint once when I had a cold and could not go to church. She had a large metal affair closed on three sides with sheets of metal and there in front within this on a revolving hook hung a sirloin. This she had placed before the open fire and the joint revolved by clockwork and so was admirably cooked. The smell was delicious.

Tom Jeffs the “boot boy” who cleaned all the boots and cleaned the knives too in a shed built for the purpose outside the kitchen and did odd jobs, was a real friend. He was about 16 I suppose, yes I remember he told me so, and a real and genuine cockney; on Sundays he turned up in a high stiff white collar, a choker, which was too large and obviously a nuisance, but marked the day. We were not really allowed to play with him, but we did and he taught us many things, fret work for instance and would take a hand at cricket in the garden and he made us a snowman and a sledge and was allowed to take us tobogganing on the Heath.

What else do I remember of those childhood days at Heathfield Gardens? The old gentleman, rather bowed who lived almost next door at the last house by Squire’s Mount, so distinguished in his frock coat and top hat, who became a friend of mine and would take me for a walk on the Heath, I was then about eight, and tell me tales of English victories and heroism, and of ancient Rome. This was William Cory the poet of the Heraclitus epigram and I regard it as a wonderful honour to have been noticed by him. He had a very pretty wife much younger than himself whom I thought the prettiest woman after my mother I had ever seen. She became a Catholic. Eyebrows were lifted at this. But there were others; young girls always dressed in blue in honour it was said of “the Virgin”. “So absurd and even superstitious.” They were of the Von Hugel family. Then there was Sir Richard Temple who lived in Holford Road and had an invalid

wife if I remember right. She was said to be beautiful and they were known as “Beauty and the Beast” for he was of an astonishing ugliness, almost frightening, but we loved to catch a glimpse. He was the Anglo-Indian administrator who had been Governor of Bombay and had just published his book on “India in 1880”.

When after Church on Sunday morning we went walking in the Spaniards Road, a popular promenade, with our Father and sometimes our Mother, by the pond we would often see little stout, tubby and bearded Walter Besant the novelist and founder of the Author’s Society and George Du Maurier with his tall and handsome daughters and Newfoundland dog. They lived in The Grove.

Among my earliest recollections are visits for Christmas paid to my maternal grandmother at Chilton Polden when my grandfather was still alive and I was very young indeed; and later after my grandfather’s death, at North Petherton where she had a small house beneath whose windows ran a brook and in the garden was a great William pear tree. There were old fashioned roses too [?] in the village over the summer house York and Lancaster, Felicity & Perpetua among them and up the house a great Gloire de Dijon which old Richards the gardener I remember always called Glory be to thee John. While staying there the beautiful church with its noble tower, one of the best in Somerset which is famous for them, was being restored and a great feast was given to celebrate the completion of the work. I remember my Father giving a subscription in assistance as from “two sailor boys” for we were dressed in men o’ war suits as was then a custom for young boys.

From North Petherton our grandmother would take us for a week or two to Burnham and it was there I met for the first and only time my Great Grandmother who died shortly after this at the age of 97, a fine old lady, in a rather bulky silken dress and wearing a lace cap. She had with her to look after her, her daughter, Aunt Annie, very small and petite and long lived like all the Chapmans.

Burnham was thought to be bracing with ozone, probably the ozone was nothing but rotting seaweed. It had magnificent sands and sandhills rich in butterflies, and two lighthouses one of which stood on stilts on the sands. But the sea was barred from us at low tide by fifty yards of channelled mud, impossible to cross and we always knew Burnham as “Burnham on the mud”.

My Grandmother was a proud old lady, very intelligent, indeed gifted, with a strong character and a will of her own. She led her daughter, my poor bright-eyed Aunt Alice who lived with her, a difficult life. The little modern villa in Northfields in Bridgewater where she died aged 93 was full of lovely and dainty things, old furniture, silver and glass. Her retainer and housekeeper old Lizzie who was devoted to her used to give us that West Country bacon served with a dish of potatoes and green vegetables baked in a dish. She would not allow us to call the cream Devonshire cream, she insisted the proper name was Clotted Cream because she was jealous for Somerset.

My Grandmother was a true blue Tory and named her villa at Northfield “Iddesleigh”. She despised “Papists” and Nonconformists alike and stuck to the good old Church of England. Why not? Was it not Milton who stated that when God had anything to declare he declared it first to His Englishmen? I was her favourite grandson and after my marriage I took my newly wedded wife to call on my Grandmother. She received her graciously. “My dear”, she said, “what a lovely dignity you have. How sweet you are, I wish I had my carriage and pair as I once had, I would have sent them to meet you at the station.”

I can recall few friends of my parents coming to our house. We seem to have entertained very little. Once my mother’s brother from Buenos Aires brought his beautiful South American wife to stay, and once my Father’s brother from Canada, where he was an important Freemason, visited us, (my uncle Will). He gave us each a model yacht, which we delighted to sail on the Whitestone pond.

Not only were the visitors very few, there were no books in the house save Bibles and Prayer Books and a huge one volume edition (I think Leopold) of Shakespeare's plays. Sometimes my mother would get a novel from Mudie, perhaps *Edna Lyall*, and there was about the house a four volume edition of *Middlemarch*, which nobody opened. But as I grew older we flooded the house with Ballantyne and Henty and Gordon Stables and my Father to my Mother's disapproval introduced me to Captain Marryat's stories, but they were beyond me except *Masterman Ready*.

Later I read Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and *Master of Ballantrae* which I can still read with pleasure and think his best books: Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* and *She*, which my Father read and enjoyed; and Kingsley's *Westward Ho*, Walter Scott's *Talisman*, *Quentin Durward* and *Peveril of the Peak* I read as holiday tasks with Dicken's [sic] *Tale of Two Cities*. *Monte Cristo* and the *Three Musketeers* by Dumas pere I also thoroughly delighted in the *Pilgrim's Progress*. The first poetry I enjoyed and my first vision of Italy, which was to mean so much to me all through my long life, I found in Macaulay's verses:

From many a lonely hamlet
Which hid by beech and pine
Like an eagle's nest hangs on the crest
Of purple Apennine

From lordly Volaterrae
Where scours the far-famed hold
Piled by the hands of giants
For godlike Kings of old

From where sweet Clanis wanders
Through corn and vines and flowers.
From where Cortona lifts to heaven
Her diadem of towers

The harvests of Arretium
That year old men shall reap
That year young boys in Umbro
Shall plunge the struggling sheep
And in the vats of Luna
This year the must shall foam
Round the white feet of laughing girls
Whose sires have marched to Rome.

When I read those verses many years later to my small son he looked up and said: "Daddy why are you crying?" I have the book still; it was given me by my Mother and had been given to her by her teacher "as a reward for general improvement in her studies" in 1862. Blessed be Macaulay!

Yes, that was my first vision of Italy, others were to come later.

The *Lays of Ancient Rome* were almost the first poetry I consciously enjoyed and knew by heart after Nursery Rhymes and such delightful nonsense as "The Owl and the Pussycat", for at Highgate where I was soon to go I learnt far more Latin verse than English, though we did learn by heart parts of *Marmion* and *Rokeby*. And then some one gave me – was it Dr. Bickersteth? – *Palgrave's Children's Treasury of Lyric Poetry*. There I found "Ye Mariners of England" and "On Linden when the sun was low" by Campbell, "John Gilpin" and "Toll for the Brave" by Cowper, Byron's "The Assyrian came down", Ben Jonson's "It is not growing like a tree", Southey's "After Blenheim" and Drayton's "Fair stood the wind for France", part of which Mr. Cory had repeated to me, and others. But the verses that I liked best were Blake's "Little Girl Lost" and Shelley's "Arethusa Arose: though I did not in the least understand them. Is that necessary for delight? Who can understand Keats?"

... Charm'd magic casements opening on the foam
of perilous seas in fairy lands forlorn.

Perhaps I loved them for their mystery and their music and all the more because I could not understand them.

I was also enthralled by Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*. It appalled me. One foggy day, so foggy that my Father did not go down to London, looking up at the yellow fog through which a red sun was beginning to appear, I said to him, "Look at the bloody sun", upon which I received a resounding smack on the head. Bursting into tears I heard my angry Father say "Good God, where do you pick up such language?" Still crying I sobbed "But it's in the book." "What book?" I fetched it and all explained itself³ But my Father said to my Mother "That little boy reads too much. It must be stopped."

In the earliest days of my boyhood my Father sometimes rode into town instead of going by train. With one of his horses named Bob he used to drive us out as far as Totteridge or even Hadleigh. We had a favourite lane at Totteridge filled in May with hawthorn in full bloom. And there was a governess cart and a pony into which with two nurses we used to pile. However Robert the groom let the pony down one day at the top of the East Heath road, smashing the shafts and breaking the pony's knee. No one was hurt, but that was the end of that.

Looking back I am impressed by the dullness of our childhood at Cannon Place. Of course we used to go for walks and wander all over the Heath with our nurses, but our nursery was in the basement of the house and looked out into an area above which the garden spread though we could not see it. The room looked north and never got the sun. It possessed a large rose-wood bookcase without a book, filled with nursery paraphernalia. There was a low cupboard in which our toys were kept, a rocking horse, the nursery table at which we ate, chairs and an iron bed which collapsed into a large cushioned chair. I used to curl myself up in it when I first learnt to read with a book called "Brian and Katie". It had a sequel called "Those Unlucky Twins" which I remember buying at Hewetson's on Rosslyn Hill.

I say the nursery was dark, even forbidding, but the night nursery at the top of the house (except for the attics where the servants slept – not the nurse) faced south right across London. It had a very large satin wood wardrobe on top of which had been placed or tossed the very hideous monkey, ancestor of the beloved Teddy bear. Looking out one Christmas Eve, sleepless for excitement, expecting the morrow and its presents, I remember seeing the Star of Bethlehem bright in the heavens; and one Good Friday towards sunset leaning out of the window I felt, a trick of the heavily laden spring air, the sultry heat of the South, the very atmosphere and tragedy of Calvary. Even into our unimaginative, ordinary, middle class lives such dreams could come. But that night nursery could produce other dreams, other visions certainly not beneficent. I was frightened in the dark and for this reason there was always a nightlight burning in a saucer on the chimney piece. But there was that approach up the dark staircase outside the half open door on which I could, or thought I could, hear footsteps stealthily approaching. I called for nurse: "Nurse I want a drink of water." This would be brought. But she was not deceived. "Now if you're a good boy and don't call again, but go to sleep properly, you shall use a knife at dinner tomorrow." A thing I had wanted badly for some time. But how do you go to sleep "properly"? Another time

³ The passage in *The Ancient Mariner* is this:

All in a hot and copper sky
The bloody sun at noon
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

I still have my copy of *The Children's Treasury of Lyric Poetry* selected and arranged by F.T. Palgrave (Macmillan 1877) in which *The Ancient Mariner* appears. Of course I ought to have been congratulated on an apt quotation.

things were more serious and I demanded my Mother and got her. "Mother, I think my heart is going to stop. You feel it." "No, darling, nothing of the sort is going to happen. Now go to sleep." "Yes if you stay." Yes, she stayed. Of course she stayed.

Always at Christmas we were taken to the Drury Lane pantomime where Nan Leno and Herbert Campbell and Harry Nichols had begun to lend glory to a show which, except perhaps for the Transformation scene at the end, was always vulgar I suppose, but enchanting to children who left the dross unheeded, for their elders. I can never forget Dan Leno as the wicked Baroness in *Babes in the Wood* and as the downtrodden mother of Jack in *Jack and the Beanstalk*, or as the widow Twankey in *Aladdin* and as Sister Anne falling over her harp in *Bluebeard*. But they were later. And then there were in *Cinderella* Herbert Campbell and Harry Nichols as the ugly sisters. It was I think in one of these pantomimes that Arthur Roberts brought the house down with shrieks from the children when he started spitting out all his teeth in trying to play a trumpet. It was robust stuff, but its sentimentality was at any rate more virile than that of Peter Pan, and the fairies more real and enchanting. We were not asked whether we believed in them. They were there, and when the curtain rose it revealed the real world we had always known in our hearts.

We were not taken to any other theatres. I still regret that we were not even taken to a concert. Our only music was what my dear Mother played us on the piano at home and what we heard in church and the hymns we sometimes sang as a family on Sunday evenings when we did not to church. These were not confined to Dr. Bickersteth's *Hymnal Companion* but were often taken from Sankey and Moody, such as "Pull for the shore sailor", "There is a Happy Land", "There were Ninety Nine that safely lay", "When Mothers of Salem", "Hold the Fort for I am coming" and so forth. But I think, though we liked to sing "Eternal Father strong to save" and "Abide with me" the best hymns are those for children: "While shepherds watched", "There is a green hill", "How the day is over", "Once in Royal David's City", "There's a Friend for little children" and so on. Many of the others seem somewhat self conscious.

Our nurse took us I remember to Madame Tussaud's but we were not allowed in the Chamber of Horrors much to our disappointment. I recall at the entry treading on the foot of the policeman only to find to my indignation he was wax.

Our Mother took me to the Dore Gallery where a large picture of Christ leaving the Pretorium and of Christians being devoured by lions in the Colosseum while angels hovered above them in the sky were to be seen on permanent exhibition all through the year at the Dore Gallery in Bond Street. Such an exhibition is today regarded as ridiculous but in former ages such pictures of [?] works of art were the delight of the people & [?]. But we were not taken to the National Gallery or to the Royal Academy though our parents went there and greatly admired the painting of Lord Leighton and the "picture of the year".

The London of those days was very different from what it is today. Hampstead was then very far away from it. It lay below curled up like some dark and growling wild beast. It was to be reached only by a bus which started at "The Bird in Hand" in the High Street, between the tiny dark Post Office on the other side of Flask Walk and the toyshop where we used to spend our pennies. The bus was large, the floor covered with straw and the conductor was an old man with white beard and whiskers who when the bus was about to start stood on the step holding on by a strap and announcing in a loud voice "London, London, anyone for London". Then it started for its 45 minute journey to "The Horse Shoe" in Tottenham Court Road and St. Giles in the Fields, down Rosslyn Hill and Haverstock Hill to Chalk Farm and Camden Town and Hampstead Road into the roar of London, a roar which has now quite disappeared. In Tottenham Court Road it met other buses. Ours was yellow but others red or green and some white. Hansoms flitted by, and growlers (four wheelers) while boys swept up the horse dung, nipping under the horse's heads in those dirty streets which the ragged crossing sweepers kept passable. The roar of traffic on the

granite setts or the macadam never ceased by day unless as it happened a stretch of some street had been covered with straw past a mansion where an invalid lay dangerously ill.

We lived at 13 Cannon Place lately Heathfield Gardens till I was thirteen. And by the way the number 13 has haunted our family. My half-brother Ernest was thirteen years older than I and was born on April 13; my Mother was twice 13 years older than I, for she was 26 when I was born. My Father's office was at 13 Thavies Inn and our home was 13 Cannon Place. My only son was born on June 13 in the 13th year of my marriage.

It was now my Father bought the lease of Elm Lodge, Elm Row, a fine William and Mary house like many in Hampstead. It stood back from Heath Street and behind a front garden had a fine entrance into a large hall upheld by pillars of wood. This became our drawing room. The rooms were panelled and the great staircase out of the hall was so broad and the steps so low that even a two year old would have found them easy. There was a great room on the first floor that had been the drawing room which was for us the chief bedroom and the large room behind it was my Father and Mother's room with a small room beside it and the only bathroom in the house. I too had my room on that floor and chose it because it had a large fitted bookshelf. It looked over the garden and Elm Row and nurseries and servants' rooms were above.

The vast cellars in which in the dark it was easy to lose oneself, my brother Robert and I used in part for chemistry experiments as we grew older after he had been given as a Christmas present a box of apparatus and bottles of chemicals. I soon had one too. There we repeated the experiments we had seen at school. This was of course after we went to Highgate in 1886. We once filled the house with Chlorine gas. This was an accident – which made my Father very cross on his return from the City. These chemical experiments and play were the foundation no doubt of my brother Robert's brilliant career, as the inventor of [_____] in which he became Goldsmiths' Professor of chemistry at Cambridge, Fellow of Clare College and a Warden of the Goldsmiths Company. I see Professor Pevsner in his book on London buildings describes Elm Lodge as "a forbidding house". Well my Father was to die there.

From Cannon Place as from Elm Lodge Robert and I attended the Cholmeley School at Highgate (Highgate School) which we entered in 1886 when I was 11 and my brother 9. We walked the two miles or more every morning save Sundays along the Spaniards Road and down Hampstead Lane, leaving home at 8 a.m. to be in Chapel at 9, returning every afternoon. In all the years we were at Highgate we were never once late for Chapel. I suppose because we lived so far away.

It was early when we two very small boys left home and we often accompanied the Postman as companion over the lonely Heath. He was delivering letters at the Spaniards Inn and the houses thereabouts. Erskine House then faced the road and has now disappeared. In the winter it was quite dusk when we returned, the Hampstead Lane deep in mud, very lonely in the dark and rather frightening. We used sometimes silently without a word so as not to admit we were afraid, to take hands.

In those days the woods in spring, Kenwood and Bishop's wood on either side the lane were full of blue bells like pieces of the blue sky fallen from heaven. There summer and winter we made our way in Eton suits and bowler hats hideously ringed with the school ribbon of red and blue or in "boater" straw hats adorned in the same way. At first we were quite alone, but later a few other boys made the same journey either by the Spaniards Road or by the fields under Parliament Hill between the Highgate Ponds. Among them was Arthur Tansley who became a friend of ours, and was to be the famous Botanist and Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, Sir Arthur Tansley.

I have no happy memories of Highgate School. We were mercilessly bullied, the great idea being to discover our Christian names. The Headmaster Dr. McDowell – "the Head" – must have become aware of this and could have stopped it by printing a list with the full names of every boy.

He did nothing. He was a tall refined distinguished looking elderly man – a typical headmaster of the time and not alone in this that we never had anything to do with him or he with us (perhaps fortunately). We sometimes met him out riding and capped him.

We were both in the choir and I have had the surplice burnt off my back in the little surplice room at the end of the basement passage almost under the lofty chapel beneath which the poet Coleridge lay buried and abandoned.

I enjoyed Chapel especially the chanting of the psalms many of which I thus got by heart especially psalm 19 which I think was set for Morning Prayer on Mondays: “The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork”. But we soon managed to get out of the choir as it meant going for choir practice on Saturday and delayed us after school.

I say I have no happy memories of Highgate but the master of the first form in which as children we entered E.H. Kelly was kind and all I learnt at Highgate, the rudiments of Latin and Greek I learnt under J.G. Lamb the master in my day of the Remove. But the one unforgettable personage among the masters I had anything to do with was the French Master Monsieur de Beaumont with his white hair, white whiskers, his red silken tie in a gold ring, the Legion d’Honneur button on his coat, his spats, his French shoes and curious walk or toddle rather, his very French English accent and the odour of cachous which always hung about him. The legend was that he had been a cavalry officer in the Franco-Prussian war and his slightly bow legs suggested this. He and the German master were cat and dog anyway.

My Father spoke fluent and excellent French for he had been at the famous school at Vevey run by [_____]. He used to help us in fact to do our French lessons more or less for us and “Froggy” as M. de Beaumont was called suspected this and would tear the exercise up or strike out what we had written at our Father’s dictation with an elegant French flourish of his gold pencil and glaring through his gold pince-nez would shout “ I will not correct your Vater’s exercise.” I would say “But please Sir... ” “You will write out one thousand lines.” “But Sir...” “You will write one thousand lines. Bring them to my house.” His house was in Hampstead Lane where it climbs steeply up to the North Road and the School. There with the lines reduced to fifty or a hundred, I would go with them in my hand, to be met by Madame de Beaumont, a dear old lady who, immensely sympathetic to the little boy so cruelly treated, invariably gave me a slice of Madeira cake in defiance of her husband. But one could always mollify him with a buttonhole or bit of geranium we found.

“Froggy” was a character and a loveable person which is more than I can say of the school porter – Collins – no not Collins, Carter or some such name. He was reported to have been in the Guards and his great height confirmed this though trailing about with a broom and bucket was a redoubtable mufti. He was an enemy to little boys who invariably plagued him. He was so huge and so dirty and they were so small.

There was no tuck shop at the school in my day, but a man with a tray of doughnuts and such used to stand under the trees against the wall in the quadrangle and sell them for one penny a piece. And everyone wanted to borrow a penny! Otherwise there was the pastrycook’s shop up three steps opposite the cable tram terminus in the High Street.

The Swimming Bath in the Field had just been opened and there I learnt to swim and occasionally watched far off a cricket match from under the old oak. The first eleven colours were red and white, very pretty. I well recall French and Docker playing against the M.C.C. French went in with a boast from the Pavillion and got a duck, out third ball.

In those days it was the custom for two Prefects to close the Chapel doors at 9 a.m. excluding late comers, and to march together up the Chapel to their places. No doubt they do it still. I remember Docker, Lushington and French who were heroes to us. One of the Prefects in turn had to read the New Testament Lesson every morning. One, I forget his name, read the

passage appointed from St. Paul's epistle in which great Diana of the Ephesians occurs. He chose to pronounce Diana as Deeahna in which of course he was quite right, but his pedantic eccentricity was the talk of the whole school, masters and boys, for a whole morning for we were taught to pronounce Latin as though it were English.

As day boys we took little interest in the games. After the long walk to and from Hampstead we were not keen on the exertion and luckily there was no actual compulsion. The games were not "organized" as they are today. However when I was in the Lower fourth under "the Jew" I won the form Quarter Mile. I remember Froggy started us and something went wrong with the pistol. I was given 35/- as the prize with which I was hugely delighted as I intended to spend it on books, for even then I was devoted to reading. However the Rev. R.L. Morris my Form master – the "Jew"⁴ – demanded the money from me (he was shocked, probably rightly) and it was spent for me on an electro-plated cup or chalice on a stem foot, the cup engraved with maiden hair fern. This I was given later at the general prize giving. Where is the wretched thing today?

We were at first really very unhappy at Highgate. I remember my brother and I kneeling down in the Spaniards road and praying that we might be taken away. Our prayer, as I suppose all prayers are, was answered in an unexpected way, for a few days later we were laid up with measles.

We used to have lunch at the house of the Rev. R. Fayrer, a House master and I think Master of the Fifth Form. He was enormously fat and his house was in the South Grove. But between the end of morning school and lunch there was an hour's interval and nowhere to go. So we used to haunt Highgate cemetery where although we didn't know it all the Forsyth's lay about Karl Marx. There is a good comprehensive view over this vast burial ground from the platform behind St. Michael's Church. We were fascinated by the Catacombs, a feature of this cemetery, largish underground circles of vaults excavated in the ground each closed with a massive door and reached by a flight of steps leading to a circular ambulatory on either side of which are the vaults.

There one day as we descended my brother and I and a boy who was with us called I think Scott were surprised (and terrified) to encounter the Devil, yes the Devil in person tail and all. Scott or whoever he was fainted. My brother who had also seen the apparition caught him in his arms as he collapsed and slid him down till he lay along the steps. The figure had disappeared and when we had recovered a bit my brother and I descended and one going one way round, the other the other to meet midway (it took great courage) we made the round trying the door of every vault. All were locked and we found no one.

This strange affair has never been explained. There was only the one descent to the Catacomb and Scott or whoever he was still lay in a faint across it. It was therefore impossible for anyone who was there – a gardener or attendant of the cemetery – to have escaped discovery. Scott or whoever he was we recovered and got away and helped him to go home. He was away ill for many weeks.

I was about 14 years old and already in love with a girl I had met while she was decorating the Christ Church font for Easter with what then became and remains my favourite flower, the pheasant-eyed Narcissus. Her name was Maud. She lived in Hampstead in a house now pulled down at the top of Holford Road. It had a towered lookout and as I had to pass the house on my way to school she would meet me at her door and give me a kiss and sometimes in the afternoon, when she could, she would go to the lookout and as I came along the Spaniards Road we could see one another afar off and she would wave a handkerchief to tell me she would meet me when I reached her house. We had a swing in the garden at Elm Lodge and I used to swing her as high as

⁴ The Rev. Leslie Morris was of course not a Jew though he looked like it. Far from it, he was Scottish and so Jacobite that I remember him telling the Form that he was ashamed to say it was his people who sold King Charles to Cromwell I think on January 30, Charles' fatal day, in 1647.

I could. She was very pretty and had such pretty legs and ever prettier drawers. I think of her when I see Fragonard's *L'Escarpolette* in the Wallace Collection.

But our days at Hampstead were numbered. For suddenly after Christmas in December 1890 my Father lay dying of double pneumonia in the great bedroom at Elm Lodge with his children all kneeling round his bed only half knowing what was happening.

He had been a very active and successful man in the family business of manufacturing Silversmith and Cutlers of Sheffield and London. He used to leave the house every morning before eight o'clock to walk down to Finchley Road Station on the Midland line for the train for Farringdon Street, picking up the *Standard* on his way at the little newspaper shop next to Nokle the fishmonger in Heath Street. His office was at 18 Thavies Inn which he had occupied for many years and lived in with his first wife before he married my Mother in 1874. It was an old dark and Dickensian place (see *Bleak House*) dismal too it seemed to me as a child and then filled on two floors with samples of silver teapots, cream jugs, salvers and electro plate. Three or four clerks sat round a lofty desk on high stools and there was an early telephone let into the wall, into which Drake the clerk with the loudest voice used to shout like mad. But the soul of the place was Markwell the porter a genial cockney, an irreplaceable person, devoted to my Father, his face covered with the stigmata left by smallpox. He was a friend of ours and used to come up to our house in Hampstead on the 5th of November with a large box of fireworks which my Father and he let off in the garden for our entertainment and as we grew older he would take us to a shop in Heath Street to see the torchlight procession on Guy Fawkes day which, with a bonfire on the Heath, made Hampstead almost as famous as Lewes. Now and then, too, Markwell would come up and help my Father with a very tricky and smelly magic lantern with slides of Robinson Crusoe and other tales.

At intervals we went down with my Father to Thavies Inn and went his "rounds" with him – and very tiring though great fun it was – to various dealers and shops and to the Army and Navy stores which William Hutton and Sons supplied with all their silver, electro plate and cutlery. This was when we needed new clothes generally bought at Hyams in Oxford Street where my Mother might join us in the afternoon.

On these occasions my Father always took us to lunch at Spiers and Pond on Holborn Viaduct and we always chose sausages and mashed potatoes. Sometimes there we met our Father's business friends and acquaintances who called him Count Cavour. It was I remember a great blow to my Father and to the family business when the Army and Navy Stores suddenly ceased to buy from William Hutton & Sons. For he and my uncle his junior partner had just built a large new factory in West Street in Sheffield. That year we had very few Christmas presents. But my Father was not called Count Cavour for nothing; his energy and ability were such that he soon replaced the loss with new customers.

After my Father's funeral on a miserably cold and foggy January day in Highgate cemetery we all returned to the desolate home and Mr. Francis Munton my Father's lawyer and friend, a member of the Law Society, a handsome and distinguished looking man, now one of our guardians, read the Will to the assembled family.

My dear Mother was now left at the age of forty with six young children (five sons and a daughter, one son had died as a baby), of which I was the eldest, to bring up. Fortunately she had no money troubles. However Dr. Bickersteth then Bishop of Exeter had not forgotten her and was aware of her situation. He came up to see her and advised her to sell Elm Lodge and to come down to her native West Country, to Tiverton in Devon; to take her sons away from Highgate School and send them as day-boys to Blundell's. "Come down into my diocese", he said. "I will look after you."

My dear Mother who had the greatest admiration and respect for the Bishop decided to do that. Elm Lodge was put on the market and presently sold. We were all sent to stay with relations and my Mother went off to find a house in Tiverton as the Bishop had directed.

Dr. Bickersteth who thus had so important an influence on our lives and who later confirmed me in his private chapel at Exeter was an earnest pious and gentle old man with more strength of character behind his piety than one would have expected at first sight. He was a cultured and devoted clergyman, the son of a clergyman of the Evangelical School of Cambridge and the Church of England. He not only wrote a long and it must be said mediocre epic in the style of *Paradise Lost*, but sold 75,000 copies of it. He compiled a Hymn book, the *Hymnal Companion* largely used in Evangelical churches. Unfortunately he was inspired to add therein a poor if Christian verse to Newman's "Lead Kindly Light". His *Yesterday, Today and For Ever* was the Evangelical reply to Keble's *Christian Year* and has an interest if only on that account. He had given a copy to my Mother who treasured it but all her life read *The Christian Year*.

Bickersteth had been Vicar of Christ Church Hampstead for thirty years and was much beloved there. My Mother used to say that Queen Victoria kept a book in which she entered the names of very holy men among her subjects and that Dr. Bickersteth's name was in it. The Queen was moved to make him Dean of Gloucester but this was no sooner done than she was inspired to create him Bishop of Exeter. Or was it Mr. Gladstone? He became Bishop of Exeter in succession to Frederick Temple who had been at Blundell's School, where he used to hit the future author of *Lorna Doone* on the head with a "brass headed hammer", to which Blackmore attributed his later epilepsy. A very different man with little or nothing of the gentleness of Bickersteth.

There can hardly be a better example of the "comprehensiveness" of the Church of England than the spectacle of Dr. Bickersteth of Exeter and Dr. King of Lincoln being consecrated together in St. Paul's when Dr. Liddon preached on "the Episcopal office". Dr. King claimed and believed he was a Catholic, while Dr. Bickersteth gloried in being a Protestant and meant it. I cannot imagine the latter in a mitre, still less in a cope and still less again in a chasuble. The "Communion Table" at Christ Church in its invariable red covering bore at its centre a large brass alms dish, not a Cross still less a Crucifix and candles.

Personally Dr. Bickersteth had a wide influence. He had a slight lisp which was rather attractive. Besides his success with his epic he wrote some well known hymns such as "Peace perfect peace", which is used throughout the Church of England and among Nonconformists.

Dr. Bickersteth had sixteen children by his first wife and when she died he married again. Why should this shock me? But it does.

I imagine all this has little meaning today. I do not know what happens now at Christ Church, Hampstead, but in my boyhood it was full every Sunday morning and its collections on Hospital Sunday or for the Church Missionary Society were if not the largest next the largest in London.

We were all taken to church by our Father and Mother for the service of Morning Prayer, Litany, ante Communion and sermon – a really long business on Sunday morning. And my Father – yes he used to pray into his top hat on entering – took me to church on a Sunday evening. But then I liked going to church. I adored for instance the beautifully involved relative clauses of the prayer in the morning service "Oh God who art the author of peace..." with its Cranmer's English if it be Cranmer's.

And talking of "church" I remember when the well known hymn was being sung in which the verse

Can a woman's tender care
Cease toward the child she bear?
Yes, she may forgetful be..

We children used to look reproachfully at our mother, when a slight blush would mantle her cheek. Heartless children are for no children ever enjoyed more tender care from a dearer Mother.

And then when my young brother Bertie was taken to church with us for the first time, in the middle of one of the hymns he caught my Mother's arm and shouted indignantly "I can't hear my own voice".

We were most carefully instructed in our religion by my Mother. We were taught the catechism and given sixpence when we could say it by heart. We were supposed to learn the Collect every Sunday and in our earliest years my dear Mother heard us say our prayers at her knee. She used to read us *Line upon Line* and the other books written by the lady who nearly married the future Cardinal Manning after the death of his first wife and as children we were each given a large quarto paraphrase of the Bible illustrated with full page steel plates and later a Bible printed on India paper and bound in leather (stuffed with cotton wool) which we were shown how to mark with a mapping pen. I still treasure my dear Mother's old Bagster Bible almost entirely marked all through, underlined with minute writings and comments and references. All our names and births and confirmations and marriages are there. Together with the death of my Father and a photograph of the remarkable great altarpiece, a picture of the Deposition, over the altar of St. Mary's Church in Bridgwater, Somerset, where she was born, christened and married. When I became a Catholic my only grief was that it grieved her.

I had better say at once that my Mother was a remarkable woman. Small dark with lovely and such kind eyes, beautiful I always thought her. She resembled her mother, a Chapman, and was I have often thought a Silure, pockets of the descendants of those early inhabitants of our island are still to be found in Penselwood and that part of the old crooked shire. The Chapmans had been in West Somerset for ages and had lived on and farmed Brean Down and at one time, so the family legend goes, had owned Glastonbury Abbey and used to sell the stones from the great ruin to mend or build the causeway over the marsh between Glaston and Wells. Many of them lie at Wells and Wedmore, their tombstones of slate still clear and intact.

No one ever met my Mother or even saw her without as we say vulgarly to-day "falling for her". Of all the men and women I have met in my long life my Mother was the most spontaneously loveable and the most unselfish. But she had a strong character which she got from her mother, so strong that in spite of all Mr. Munton our lawyer guardian could say or my Uncle Herbert Hutton whom however she disliked and distrusted or her own brother Harry who when my Grandfather was congratulated on his "steady" son, replied: "Steady yes, if he were any steadier he'd stand still", she insisted on taking all my Father's money out of the family business, in which he was the senior partner with my uncle and re-investing it as Munton was obliged to advise in Government and Colonial trustee stocks. I suppose the result was to give her an income of about 8000 [pounds sterling] a year. But the family business had to become a limited company.

After my Father's funeral when my Mother had decided to take Dr. Bickersteth's advice and sell Elm Lodge and go to Tiverton we were all planted out – it was Christmas holidays – on various relations. My brother and I went to my uncle at Sydenham and haunted the Crystal Palace where we used to potter about and attend the free orchestral afternoon concerts conducted by August Mann. They were the first I ever heard.

My Mother set off for Tiverton with my cousin Marion a young woman of about twenty-five who it was arranged was to be a sort of permanent companion. At Tiverton she was taken to see a house in Old Blundells and presently encountered the owner, old Mr. Ford of the locally famous brewery. Mr. Ford, a remarkable character in his frock coat and top hat of course immediately became her devoted adherent and let her for a small rent the charming and delightful house in Old Blundells behind the south east end of that beautiful building with its splendid close enclosed by the "ancient walls of Blundell" and its then unpollarded secular limes. The two spacious lawns and the famous triangle spread themselves in serene beauty. The house with its

sunshine and its ancient rooms and large garden, its vine and crab apple tree and above all its ineffable peace was to be our home.

It was on Monday March 9, 1891 that my brother Robert and I started from Paddington Station to join my Mother who had now got the house at Tiverton in order and was ready to receive us. It was an ugly day with a blustery wind and cold, but little did we know that the Blizzard of the West was waiting for us in the West Country.

In those days the G.W.R., best as we thought of all railway lines, was still using the Broad Gauge and the carriages were still without mechanical heating but were “warmed” with great metal “foot warmers”, which a porter would slam and slide into the compartment. Every express by contract with Spiers & Pond stopped for ten minutes at Swindon.

As the train proceeded that afternoon the weather got worse and snow was falling blown against the windows by great gusts of wind. After Bath the snow storm increased and the wind rose to a gale. Slowly and ever more slowly we passed through Bristol then Taunton as night descended upon us and the world disappeared in an ever deeper ghostly white. We crept along and entered the Whitehall tunnel some miles before Tiverton Junction. We entered but came to a standstill at the exit. Something had gone wrong. Either we had run into a snow drift or the engine had left the line. In any case it proved to be a final stop. And there we were for the night, the gale laden with sheets of snow howling and roaring about us. Very cold it was. It seems we were not alone; every train on every line between Plymouth and the rest of the world was brought to a standstill. At Teignmouth the express had been nearly swept into the sea, the huge waves breaking high over the carriages.

Of course we thought it an exciting adventure and were perhaps the only people on the train who were not distressed. Delighted we were – at first. But it got colder and colder and the windows and doors seemed unable to keep out the icy gale. And there was nothing to eat! Lying in one another’s arms tightly embraced for warmth we began to think of the anxiety of our Mother awaiting us at Tiverton, to which we had till then characteristically not given a thought.

It was just before daylight when we were rescued and haltingly taken on the few miles to Tiverton Junction at about half past six. There we made our way to the Railway Hotel and with others were hospitably received and given breakfast.

Then we set out; it took some courage, through the six feet drifts and with difficulty made our way in some four hours to Tiverton about five miles distant to our distracted Mother and our new home.

Chapter II

In those days, when I was at Blundell's, Old Blundell's had been abandoned and the school had been transferred to new buildings about a mile outside the town on higher ground. Yet it was my luck, for I was a Day Boy, to live in the old school, Elizabethan still in spite of many a minor change; a long line of weathered grey stone broken by great mullioned windows and two windowed porches, built in 1604; all under a steepish roof with a small airy dome, where an old gold handed clock marked or did not mark the innumerable hours. Before it lay the beautiful great Close, surrounded by ancient lime trees, where the vast lawns stretched away to the gates of seventeenth century iron, flanked by two lodges. Between the lawns lay the causeway, paved with cobbles, which divided to enclose the "ironing box", that triangle of green turf where as you may read in Blackmore's famous romance *Lorna Doone*, Jan Ridd fought Robin Snell while John Fry looked on. The whole building with its Close was surrounded and shut in behind the towering limes by ancient walls of stone where grew many a fern and nested many a wild bird.

Under those immemorial lime trees, in that green cloister under the high embowed roof the happiest days of my boyhood began. There I first read Milton, began to appreciate Virgil, was bored by Horace, who has nothing for a boy save his music – that famous dying fall – learned by heart page after page of Greek and Latin verse, sailed with Odysseus through Sylla [sic] and Charybdis, was unhappy for Dido, wept for Hector, watched with the guard on the high ridge over the burning plain full of red dust where Antigone found the body of her brother, and kept the temple of Apollo with the young Ion; and when I lifted my eyes from the book I saw about me that luxury of ancient building, of lawn and great trees where I lived, where I was taught to live, like an anchorite within "the grey stone walls of Blundell".

There were famous names on those walls, Carew, Buller, Vyvyan, Yeo, Worth, the names of the West Country. Temple too was there, Temple of Exeter, London and Canterbury, and Blackmore also, but though I often looked for it behind the shrubberies, I never found the name of the most famous Blundellian of all, Jan Ridd. But often there I read and re-read the well-thumbed pages of *Lorna Doone* lying in the shade of the sweet lime trees on a summer afternoon.

And now those days, far happier than ours, come back to me almost as though they were yesterday and I find myself turning the pages of another book, the Register of Blundell's School. There is Blackmore's name and his father's and his uncle's, here Temple, proudly signed in his success F. Exon; here the sporting parsons, Jack Russell who kept a pack of hounds at Blundell's and Jekyll's and Frouac's, all famous in their day and some beloved. I think of them all for I have heard all about all of them. I remember too the scholars, the great Civil Servants, the international "caps", the "Blues", the Nobel Prizemen and most of all the soldiers but I find in my heart no envy at all of any of them. The boys I envy as I turn the pages of this imperfect old Register, where many a date is missing, are the boys who have never left, or so the old Register seems to say: the boys who have been at Blundell's all their lives and who still no doubt linger under the lime trees with their friends conning Virgil and playing cricket.

Yes, Blundell's was a very different school from Highgate. To begin with it was in the country and therefore it was better balanced between boarders and day boys. The day boys too were divided into "Houses" Town and Country with a "House Master" responsible for each. It was thus a unity with an almost passionate "patriotism" or loyalty all its own; and there was no bullying in my time at Blundell's.

There under Mr. A.L. Francis – "F" to the school, the youngest layman headmaster in England at that time, the boys tended to be friendly with the masters, who took part some of them in the games, especially in the "rigger" football at which Blundell's especially excelled, and altogether the school was a happy community and very proud of itself.

My three brothers and I entered Blundell's in 1891. Robert and I the older were up to the Rev. T.U. Cross the second Master under "F". He took the Lower Fourth and, no doubt because we had been placed in too low a form, at the end of that first summer term I won the form prize for Classics and English and my brother Robert "so like him" the Chemistry prize, which was what passed for science in those days. I took the book up to "F" to be signed. He was angry because Tommy Cross had filled the label and there was no room left for his signature. So with an exclamation of disgust he initialed it, smudged it, told me he was sorry and dismissed me. In his study there hung a large photogravure of the Sistine Madonna, the sublime picture by Raphael in Dresden. This for culture. But I doubt whether he could have repeated the Ave Maria.

I still have the book. It was *English Battles and Sieges in the Peninsula* by Sir William Napier extracted from his "Peninsular War". Unhappily we were not allowed to choose the books we were to be given. This was suitable for a boy in the Army Class. There were many at Blundell's which sent a good number to Woolwich or Sandhurst. It was quite unsuited to me and I never opened the book till one day, long after, as I was finding a place for it in rearranging some books. It fell open at page 99 and I found myself reading this magnificent piece of English prose describing the battle of Albuera:

Such a gallant line, issuing from the midst of the smoke and rapidly separating itself from the confused and broken multitude, startled the enemy's masses, then augmenting and pressing onwards as to an assured victory; they wavered, hesitated, and vomiting forth a storm of fire hastily endeavoured to enlarge their front, while a fearful discharge of grape from all their artillery whistled through the British ranks. Myers was killed, Cole, the three Colonels, Ellis, Blakeney and Hawkshawe fell wounded, and the fusilier battalions, struck by the iron tempest, reeled and staggered like sinking ships; but suddenly and sternly recovering they closed on their terrible enemies, and then was seen with what a strength and majesty the British soldier fights. In vain did Soult with voice and gesture animate his Frenchmen; in vain did the hardiest veterans, breaking from the crowded columns, sacrifice their lives to gain time for the mass to open out on such a fair field; in vain did the mass itself bear up, and fiercely striving fire indiscriminately upon friends and foes, while the horsemen hovering on the flank threatened to charge the advancing line. Nothing could stop that astonishing infantry. No sudden burst of undisciplined valour, no nervous enthusiasm weakened the stability of their order, their flashing eyes were bent on the dark columns in their front, their measured tread shook the ground, their dreadful volleys swept away the head of every formation, their deafening shouts overpowered the dissonant cries that broke from all parts of the tumultuous crowd as slowly and with a horrid carnage it was pushed by the incessant vigour of the attack to the farthest edge of the height. There the French reserve, mixing with the struggling multitude, endeavoured to restore the fight but only augmenting the irremediable disorder, and the mighty mass giving way like a loosened cliff went headlong down the steep; the rain flowed after in streams discoloured with blood, and eighteen hundred unwounded men, the remnant of six thousand unconquerable British soldiers, stood triumphant on the fatal hill.

For all his conceit and haughtiness "F" was a great headmaster though nervous and often inclined when he made a speech, for instance on Speech Day, to wander into politics and take it out of Tim Healey, who of course was not there to take it out of him; and his wit, if it was wit, was lost on us boys. All the same he was a great headmaster and there is Blundell's to vindicate him. He certainly loved the school and when he retired and yet lingered about the place, if only weeding the cricket pitch, he had greatly raised the numbers of the school and had established it firmly in its new quarters, though the buildings were trivial even ugly and the old and beautiful building on the verge of the town which was the school's real distinction lay abandoned.

The Rev. T.U. Cross the second master was quite different. His house "Old House" was after the School House, where "F" presided, the senior house. Indeed many local people talked of Blundell's as "the Rev. Cross's School" although Abraham Hayward the Editor of the Law Magazine and Edinburgh reviewer called it "the Eton of the West".

Tommy Cross was a good man and well respected even beloved. As a form master he was strict and on rare occasions had a quick and fiery perhaps uncontrollable temper seldom roused, but I have seen him savagely cane a boy, his face flushed and angry. To me (I was only with him for one term) he was most kind.

My brother Robert and I were now moved into the Upper Fourth form and were up to Francis Herring, and I was very happy there. Not so my brother Robert. Far the cleverest of us all he could not abide all the Greek and Latin we were taught. He had set his mind on Natural Science which was then in its embryo a neglected subject at Blundell's and most other Public schools. In fact I think we were only given one hour a week of "chemistry". So he used to go to sleep in form and Herring used to shy a book at him to wake him up. However his persistence drew attention to the subject and an attempt was made to supply what was lacking. Later students no doubt benefitted. My brother went on to Owen's College, Manchester, to Leipzig, Paris and eventually to be Professor of [] at Cambridge and Fellow of Clare College in that University.

But blessed be Francis Herring M.A., Humanist, sometime Scholar of Jesus College Cambridge who by some magic of his own engrafted into the mind of a careless and happy boy a respect for, nay a love of learning. I owe much to him for he encouraged me to read and enjoy reading for its own sake and it was under him I began to see the beauty of Latin. Hitherto Latin prose and Latin verse had seemed to have much the character of a puzzle; the words to have been sprinkled on the page with a pepper castor, to have no reasonable order, and when literally construed to have little possible interest for anyone. And then suddenly all was changed.

I remember very well that sudden *eclairissement*. It came to me one summer evening under the secular sweet limes of Old Blundell's, as I struggled, with many a distraction, over certain lines of the second Aeneid which I had to prepare for the morrow. Suddenly amid the dark obscurity of the unaccountable Latin these words leaped to life and meaning; and for the first time I understood, spontaneously, without translating, at a glance:

Venit summa dies et ineluctabile tempus
Dardanise; fuimus Troes, fuit Ilium et ingens
Gloria Teuchorum; ferus omnis Juppiter Argos
Tanstulit; incensa Banai dominantur in urbe.

My heart stood still; tears came to my eyes. I felt a sharp pain in the pit of my stomach; and glancing round to be sure I was alone, I kissed the page, inkstained and ragged; but it was an immortal thing I kissed. From that moment something – a dim boyish perception of the grace, the majesty and the sadness of Virgil was hidden in my heart.

So that when some time later in a higher form the master I was up to, Mr. Owen, would snort as he had a habit of doing down a long and pugnacious nose, as we were reading the "Aeneid" and say "Homer spoiled again" I would always in my heart protest and one day I held up my hand;

"Well?"

"Well, Sir, I mean Sir do you mean spoil like rob or spoil like ruin?"

"Both, boy."

"Yes, Sir, but with what a grace he does it."

"That", said Solly Owen, "is the most immoral remark I have ever heard made in this form. And I may add (snort) it is all the worse for the small (snort) – the very small measure of truth is in it."

As a matter of fact he did not care for Virgil. Homer was his man and he was reported to recite the Iliad in his sleep. He used to tell us that if Homer had to describe pulling up a boat on the beach or to make a catalogue of ships it was poetry in the most absolute sense of the word. And though I did not understand this at the time I did later and I do still. He was fond of Shelley and

on one occasion recited the first verses of "The Cloud" a propos of something or other in form. "Lovely stuff" he called it.

Then there was Mr. Roper. He did not snort, he sniffed: "Take a piece of paper and write" was his formula. He was a little man and a popular house master. I remember in an examination being asked by him what I knew of Dettingen and the only thing I knew was that it was an English victory upon which Handel had written a Te Deum. How I knew this I don't remember. But it did not win the approval of Mr. Roper. It was the wrong sort of answer. Not what he wanted. Yet surely I should have been commended for "general knowledge".

Then there was the French master "most indubitably" French, who wore a corset and had high heels and the most tragic expression; a tall dark distinguished looking creature, who was supposed, so rumour went, to have killed his brother in a duel. (Boys will believe anything romantic.) He was an obvious fencer for he had tremendously strong hands and wrists and was likely to fall into unaccountable rages which were our intense if uneasy delight: when he would take a whole sheaf of "exercises" and tear them into small pieces (a feat requiring terrific strength) and hurl them all over the room to the ironic astonishment of Herring, returning to us when the French lesson was over.

Who also do I remember among the masters? Yes, Signor Milani who taught me the violin, a very spruce north Italian; but I had to drop that as there was no time for practice or even for his lessons except out of school hours which I preferred to dedicate to other things. I expect, fond though I was of its music, I preferred the beauty of the instruments and they are most lovely, to practicing the exercises and the few airs I was haltingly able to play so disappointedly lacking perfection.

Rugby football was the great passion at Blundell's in my day and the school produced some magnificent performers and still does. We were less devoted to cricket, as indeed was the county, perhaps because it would be difficult in Devon to find a piece of ground perfectly level for the pitch. At my time it was football to which we were devoted and for which the whole school turned up to watch and cheer the school at a match. The House matches were even more keenly, even ferociously, contested. I used to play Half back and sometimes three quarters in the days of three quarters for I was very fast.

In the winter holidays we used to skate for miles on the Burlescombe Canal, shooting the bridges where the ice was thin and unsafe and rolling home in the evening sunset for tea and the glow of the fire in the dining room.

There were, too, in the Lent term the Sports; the most important event being "the Russell" a cross country run twice through the Loman stream, of about six miles which later on my brother Robert was to win.

And then there was fishing, which became my favourite. There was Blundell's Ticket which for half a crown allowed me to fish the Exe from Washfield Weir down to Bickleigh bridge and a little below, say some six miles of first rate West Country water.

It was old Cosway a decayed descendant of the great miniaturist whom my Mother found to teach me the rudiments of fishing for trout with the fly. Cosway kept a little shop just above Exe Bridge. There is or was a picture by his ancestor of the Magi in St. Peter's Church. He was an engaging old man and very appreciative – with a cocked eye for the keeper – of the Blundell's ticket and the water it placed at my and so at his disposal. So when I was tired of handling the rod under his tuition, he took it and whipped the stream with a delicacy that would have won the commendation of his famous ancestor.

It was thus I became a devoted fisherman, first with the wet fly and then with the dry. How often in early summer after school have I taken the train down to Bickleigh (four miles) and fished the reach between the weir and the New Inn and between the fine old bridge and the little Dart,

or even poached my way down to Blickleigh Court and having bought half a pound of clotted cream and some Chudleigh's, fished till I was tired, and over the Chudleigh's and cream puzzled over Cicero's *In Catalinam* beside the stream. There and elsewhere on the Exe I learned many a hundred lines of Virgil and, with old Cosway following, trailed home through the woods in the twilight shouting aloud the "repetition" I had learned for the morrow *Exspectate dies aderat monamque serena* making so uncouth a noise and so nonsensical, for I was taught Latin with an English pronunciation, as to provoke the old man to hilarious chuckles as we came through the dusk of the Collipriest woods.

As for the books I read; we had to learn a good deal of Book 1 of *Paradise Lost* at school and in conning the book – a one volume edition of Milton's Poetical Works – I came across "Lycidas" and was captivated by it. It was Francis Herring who told me to look at Virgil's Tenth Eclogue on which he suggested Milton had based *Lycidas* or had there been influenced by it. I also read a good deal of Tennyson most musical of English poets and supreme in his onomatopoeia such as

The moan of doves in immemorial alms
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

But I preferred the early poems, especially *Fatima*, the passion and the rush of it.

Herring was also something of a musician and played the organ in Chapel. I remember on one occasion when he played Handel's *Dead March* he told me of Chopin's and of Beethoven's for the death of Napoleon, and I asked my Mother to buy them and play them to me; which she did as also Mozart's Twelfth Mass (I think); all of them wonderful and my knowledge of them due to Francis Herring.

But I read a large number of books at that time, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, a number of Shakespeare's plays, *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss* by George Eliot, the *Last Days of Pompeii* by Lord Lytton, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* month by month in the Strand Magazine, Marion Crawford's Italian novels, Wilkie Collins' *Woman in White* and others. But I enjoyed most and revelled in the books of Rudyard Kipling beginning with the Gadsby stories and on to *Many Inventions*, which came out I remember in 1893. I still think Rudyard Kipling one of the three geniuses I have known in my life. His work is absolutely original, nothing like it is to be found in our literature; it is enormously various and includes a howling farce like *Brugglesmith* and a tragedy like *Love of Women*. But I now think his finest work perhaps is to be found in *Puck o' Puck's Hill* and *Rewards and Fairies*. His verse too is as original as his prose, as life-enhancing and as close to reality. For example the "Barrack room Ballads" which if it did not contain anything else – and it contained many other unforgettable verses – contained *Mandalay*. Kipling then and of course *Lorna Doone* were always my favourite reading at that time.

And then my Mother gave me Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* – I still have the book – and there I came on the Odes of John Keats among so many other treasures. When I showed the little book to Mr. Herring, for it went easily into a pocket he said: "Excellent", but it hasn't got Keats' *Ode to a Grecian Urn*. So we had to buy a complete volume of Keats and there it was, never to be forgotten. In Palgrave's volume there was a great deal of Wordsworth but the only verses of his at that time that remained with me were

And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

Blundell's was in those days very much central Church of England. The only religious instruction, if you can call it such, which as a Day Boy I received, was a construe out of the Greek Testament first thing on Monday, the daily twenty minutes in Chapel every morning and Latin prayers, that is a recitation of the Lord's Prayer and others in Latin on Saturday morning at twelve when the school was dismissed. Probably the Boarders received more. But when I suggested to Mr. M.L. Banks, a

very approachable master that a statue of St. Peter might be put in the niche over the school entry because of Peter Blundell the founder of the school, he turned to me and said “graven images would not be acceptable here”.

In Tiverton there were three churches, St. Peter’s a large Perpendicular Church dating now from the sixteenth century with a charming Greenway Chapel projecting on the south side, elaborately sculptured with ships and small figures (16th century), two dismantled chapels at the end of the north and south aisles and twelve empty niches on the twelve pillars of the nave where in Catholic times statues of the Apostles had stood. St. George’s, an eighteenth century building, rare in the country, might have been interesting but wasn’t, and there was St. Paul’s, which, architecturally was insignificant and very low church.

Canon Eyre who afterwards became Bishop of Sheffield was the Rector of St. Peter’s. He was a huge man who absurdly and unexpectedly used to weep in the pulpit. He was really unsuited to a country parish. Tiverton was only a small country market town of about 10,000 inhabitants. He was, I am sure, much happier in Sheffield.

Canon Edmonds, who was Vicar of St. George’s, was a scholar and his sermons were appreciated by the elite. He spoke as though he had a pill of bread in his mouth and when he had rolled it round his tongue he spat it out. The name of the incumbent of St. Paul’s I forget, if I ever knew it, but he used to preach in a black gown and gloves with the Bible on a cushion.

Of the doctors in the town I remember best Dr. Mackenzie who was the school doctor and a hunting man. He and Mrs. Mackenzie were to be seen at most of the meets of the “Devon and Somerset” and Sir John Amony’s Staghounds. He was a large and friendly man. The other doctors I remember were Mr. Liesching who lived in the Great House of St. George on Angel Hill and his colleague Dr. Welsford. They did not hunt I think.

Tiverton itself we always thought charming with its fine Church, its ruined Castle, Old Blundell’s and several old houses architecturally interesting, its ancient Almshouses one with a chapel. And I remember the shops – Masland where one bought the school books and other things connected with Blundell’s, Mudford’s, Hall the tailor, Meade the stationer’s and the school confectioner and Austin the tobacconist with pretty Miss Austin to serve us. The environs too were beautiful Collipriest and the Fish ponds and the dark rectory at Tidcombe under the meadows of Warnicombe, and then the heights of Exeter hill. We grew very fond of the place. The rivalry at football between the School and the Town was often fierce and always exciting.

There were many pretty girls in Tiverton, the sisters of my school fellows. One of them – older than I – I was very fond of and it was she who taught me to dance in the most ravishing manner with a shy display of her ankles a disturbing exhibition in those days of long trailing skirts down to the ground. She had an album in which one wrote down one’s favourite name, author, colour, flower and so on and what you most desired. In answer to the last question I remember writing: “to be able to appreciate beauty anywhere”. A diplomatic if priggish answer and also a portent. The answer to the first question was *de rigueur*. How pretty she was! And one day in fear and trembling taking my courage in both hands and prepared to make a dash for it I snatched a kiss. Only to find she liked it. I had forgotten all about Maud.

As for portents: One late afternoon I was sitting in the dining room listlessly getting up the passage of Virgil I had to construe and grammatically explain in form on the morrow. My penknife was open at the small blade on the table before me for I had been sharpening a pencil, when someone looked in round the half open door. It was Canon Edmonds who had been calling on my Mother.

“Ah,” said he, picking up the little book. “Virgil I see. Iliad’s lofty Temples robed in fire.....”

“So sings my Lord Tennyson. But old parsons like me who have been reading Virgil all their lives, at last get bored with him. What you already? My dear boy you are not alone, the Middle Ages got so bored with him that they turned him into a Magician. Did you ever hear of the *Sortes Virgillanne*? No? Well, it was like this.

You must shut your eyes, open your Virgil at random and still with closed eyes put your finger or a pencil haphazard on a line. That line will solve your difficulty, even decide your future. Kings, priests and statesmen have tried it, but like the Delphic Oracle it can mislead. Well, goodbye to you. I must be off.”

Off he went. But when he had gone I shut my eyes, opened the little book at random and seizing my penknife struck it forcibly into the open page. This is what I read:

Italiam petiit fatis auctoribus; esto.....

I have never forgotten it. A portent? Another portent perhaps, though again I did not know it, was vouchsafed to me when I was at Blundell’s. It must have been on the feast of SS. Peter and Paul for we had a whole holiday on “Saints days”, though we were supposed to attend chapel first at 9 a.m. Very early in the morning, for it was hot, and skipping chapel, I left home intent on a day’s fishing on the Exe down from Washford Weir. As I went along the road I had to pass the little Catholic chapel withdrawn amid its garden trees, I had never been this way before, but I was curious for I had often heard of the “idolatry” of the Roman Catholics. Softly stepping through the gate – it was absolutely quiet, no one about – I approached the door of the chapel just ajar and peeped in. There were people there, half a dozen or more on their knees. An old man with his back to them in a gorgeous red robe stood before the altar on which candles were burning. Suddenly he bowed down half kneeling. A child kneeling behind him lifted the hem of the rosy silken robe. The priest, for obviously priest he was, stood up and raising his arms above his head held up in both hands with the tips of his fingers a shining white wafer. A bell that seemed of silver as silvery was its sound tinkled three times and the Chapel bell answered it. Again he knelt or half knelt and rising raised aloft a gleaming cup and again the bell rang its silvery notes and again the Chapel bell rang thrice. The people there seemed to stir and as though I had witnessed something secret and forbidden I ran softly down the path and went on my way. But the impression of something secret and mysterious remained with me and I was always tempted to go that way again. But I never did.

Of my friends at school I chiefly remember George Groube who went into the Indian Medical, the son of Colonel Groube who had marched with Roberts from Cabul to Kandahar or the other way about and Clode Braddon the son of Major Braddon who went to Rhodesia and Greatwood the son of General Greatwood who lived at Tiverton Castle and went to Sandhurst as did Charlie Hamilton whose beautiful home on the Quantocks I see has been sold, Denys Bray who went into the Indian Civil and became Sir Denys and was Foreign Secretary to the Viceroy; H.M. Smith who also held a high place in the Indian Civil and was more particularly a friend of my brother Robert; the Halifax brothers who all went into the Indian Civil and Miles Irving who also held high office in that service and was mixed up with the tragedy of Amritsar were also among my friends. “Facey” Oldham the only one of them who had a nickname, as I and all my brothers had, went I think into the Bank of England. Jimmy Tyre the son of the Rector was Captain of the Fifteen and became a schoolmaster. After I left Blundell’s I never saw any of them again except George Groube whom I found in London at St. Mary’s.

In our holidays our Mother would take us at Easter and in the long summer vacations up on to Exmoor, to Porlock, Lynmouth or Lynton, Dunster or Dulverton and sometimes to Clovelly or Morthoc. So it was when I was a boy at Blundell’s I first saw the Exmoor hills and from them the great “tors” of Dartmoor.

There was a deep lane which led up past the Punch Bowl from the village of Winsford to Winsford Hill. It was thence I first saw those great still heights all of amethyst in the summer evening, infinitely far away against the soft sky. They filled my mind and I would often go up there to look for them (they could not always be seen) because they seemed so high and apart, something beyond my world. And once in the winter – for indeed there were winters in those days very long and cold when the valleys were bound with frost and the snow lay many feet deep in the great drifts – I saw those heights again transformed with snow; and they seemed to me not other than the “Delectable Mountains” which Christian saw far off, or than those hills so often seen in the mind of a school boy, Alban or Sabine about the only City of which we had any knowledge – Rome.

But it was Dunkerry beacon that became for me Horace’s Soracte as seen far off from the forum in Rome.

Vides ut alta stet nive candidum
Soracte.

And Horace’s farm was Cloutsham, in the true Renaissance spirit, precisely as Perugino for instance has painted his Greeks and Romans as Umbrian youths and maidens and knights and ladies in the Cambio in Perugia.

There were other things too on the lonely farms and lonelier moors above Horner or Glenthorne or the Barle. Perhaps a foolish woman who knew more than most, perhaps a male witch bearing some such name as Snow who knew more of the deer than Tucker did or even more than Goss the harbourer. There were the deer themselves or a tiny little calf hidden in a gorse bush and above all there was the loneliness, a Personage who haunted not the lovely border lands and wooded valleys above Porlock and Lynmouth, Withypool and Dulverton.

Where Exe her little Barlee hath

but the cruel sterile heart of the forest about Pinkerry Pond, the Mole’s Chamber and the Chains.

It was here *Lorna Doone* came into its own, almost compulsory reading for a Blundellian or indeed anyone living within sight of Exmoor. Of course it has its weaknesses, it sometimes drops into a sort of blank verse; Dickens has the same fault but its strength lies elsewhere than in its prose and it will perhaps outlast many a finer book by many a greater writer because it expresses something fundamental and great in itself: I mean the West country – the soul of the West country. The people in the book are more real to us, are more part of the Exmoor country than our own friends and for a stranger they are the only people which there inhabit, just as for us the only people we know in Venice are Desdemona, Othello and Iago, Portia or Shylock. It has named a whole countryside and made it its own. Many thousands of people flock to the confines of Exmoor every year because of it; it has renamed valley and hill and stream. People come to “The Doone Valley”. “The Waterslide”, “Lorna’s Bower”, and so forth and their talk is all of Jan Ridd, of Lorna and Annie and John Fry and Ruth Huckaback and Uncle Reuben, Tom Faggus, Mother Meldrum and Jeremy Stickles. They seek out Cloven rocks because Carver Doone perished there with little Ensor (who later went to Blundell’s) at his knees. They make pilgrimages to Oare, that tiny hamlet which Blackmore called a town, because there Lorna was married when cruel Carver shot her at the altar. If they knew that Oareford farmhouse was Plovers Barrows farm it would be overwhelmed with pilgrims.

What other modern book in our language has achieved such a miracle as this? Not even *Wuthering Heights*. Yet the landscape never overwhelms or dwarfs the people as in Thomas Hardy’s twenty volumes which have barely mapped out Wessex it sometimes does. If as Fielding said the novel is “a comic epic in prose”, *Lorna Doone* seems to be just that. Moreover the West Country dialect is there recorded and the book in itself is a valuable record of it, which can be used as a work of reference to decide an argument or to arrive at the truth.

From Porlock we used to follow the Staghounds on foot when they met at Cloutsham or Hawkcombe Head, and often in August and September after rain the scent would be breast high over the bracken and the heather. How we used to look forward to the first Wednesday in August when the Devon and Somerset Staghounds met at Sir Thomas Acland's farm of Cloutsham to open the staghunting season and crowds of hunting people from all over the kingdom met them there!

But long before the crowd began to leave Porlock, or Dunster, Minehead, Lynton or Dulverton Goss the Harboured had been up and about in Horner Wood. He had ridden over from Dulverton last night and at break of day saddled his pony and rode up to Woodcocks Lay and there he "harboured" a warrantable deer.

But Goss had not been so discourteous as to try and see the stag he wished to harbour. He had made a tour of the woods and when he had found a "slot" or footmark of a "warrantable" deer, that is of one more than five years old, going into the wood, he had made a complete tour, a ring walk as they say on Exmoor, round the wood, to be sure the stag had not merely passed through and gone on its way, but was still there. Then he had gone to Cloutsham Farm for breakfast and there he found Tucker at the Meet.

At eleven o'clock the pack are kenneled in the farm building and a few couple [sic] of steady hounds "tufters" are chosen to drive the harboured stag out of the wood into the open, the field meanwhile stayed at the meet.

Then when the stag had been driven out, tufters were stopped and the pack was signalled for by the waving of a handkerchief and was quickly brought up and laid on the line of scent. By this time the stag was well away. If all went well – it seldom did – and he was heading for the moor one was in for a treat. On and on past Hawkcombe Head where there was a check perhaps due to our stag lying down and putting up a hind. But on they go again to Hobert's Bridge where he soiled and so to Badgery Water where he stands at Bay often beating up and down the stream a few times. Bawden however quickly throws the lash of his whip over his head (horns); the huntsman steps in and drives his knife into his throat and the big fellow sinks into the water from which he is landed quite dead.

Such is stag hunting. But it does not often go as slick as that. There is nearly always a good deal of hanging about. This used to give us on foot a chance to keep up, especially with hind hunting. We saw a good deal of the moor in this way, far more than the crowds of summer visitors at Minehead, Dunster, Lynton or Dulverton ever see. All the approaches to Exmoor are beautiful but the moor itself is a bare rolling waste not unlike the sea with its long heaving monotony of grey water about the Mole's Chamber and Exe Head and Pinkerry Pond and the Chains, without a voice without life and without human habitation. For there is only the sound of the wind and of running water, only the life of a rare blackcock or curlew, a group of half wild ponies, or a head of deer, only far off lost in the rolling bald downs a shepherd's hut for dwelling. That is the moor and its face is the face of eternity.

But yonder is Dunkerry all glorious with purple: this is August sure enough and the hunt has passed far away beyond Hawkcomb. I aim for the Beacon seventeen hundred feet in the blue air. By a thick pile of stones I lie and look over that far stretched world of moor channelled by many a deep combe to the Severn, the solemnity of the Black Mountains in Wales to the sea beyond Lundy. Below me lies the moor, and beyond half Devon, a flash of Cornwall all the Somerset hills and only the Dorset highlands hide the Channel. Beyond in the great woods where Horner is sleeping amid its walnuts, summer is dreaming through the long day; high in heaven a lark towers in the eye of the sun pouring out its endless glory of song; and I here – my heart for it all – where my fathers signalled in the summer night the panning of the Legions, the Saxon onset, the Danish defeat, the Norman conquest, the Armada, the fifty years of Queen Victoria.

Edward Hutton

Precious and perfect days, the only complete days, the only long days, the only days of unassailable happiness – dear Blundellian hours – why were you so few?

Chapter III

That those Blundellian days were so few was entirely my own fault. I got bored with school and at seventeen insisted on leaving it. I bullied my dear mother until she consented to let me go to a tutor, a man we had known in Hampstead, with the idea that I should read with him for Oxford. I was with him in Hampstead for a year and it was a complete failure. I did no work. I did not want to go to Oxford. I wanted to write, to become an author. While I was with my tutor I had written some essays which I afterwards collected and printed privately. They were of course quite trivial and worthless. But in writing them I became aware, or thought I did, of what I wanted to do and to be, and when I announced this and the failure of the tutorship a family council was called and Mr. Munton was summoned to advise. Of course he was rightly very "much astonished" at my having been allowed to leave school without his knowledge and waste my time with a tutor he knew nothing of. What was to be done? I could not go back to Blundell's even if I had wanted to. They certainly would not have me. When he heard that I wanted to write, after strong reproof, and having read my immature efforts, not knowing what else to do, he recommended I should be placed with a publisher. As a matter of fact he had married the daughter of Bohn the publisher and inventor of Bohn's Libraries and therefore it was obvious he was competent in such matters.

My dear Mother distracted at the foolish behaviour of her eldest son, who had made a mess of it, acquiesced and Mr. Munton advertised in *The Times* and to make a long story short, I was eventually sent to Mr. Rideal on the top floor of 6, Victoria Street and thus began the unhappiest days of my life.

I was to live with my uncle Robert in Addiscombe and from there I went up every morning to Mr. Rideal at 9 a.m. Mr. Rideal a very tall and charming person, a gentleman, was paid 100 pounds to take me on. He had no real business as a publisher. He printed and issued a few books on communism. Probably the most important book or booklet he published while I was with him was an essay on Evolution by the great Lord Salisbury which he obtained permission to print. But his main activity must have been the publication of a monthly periodical *The Senate* which I understood was paid for by the Hon. H. Cranmer Byng who also issued a volume of poems – *Pagan Poems* – with him.

The only thing I learnt with Mr. Rideal was how to correct proofs. But my chief occupation was to deliver letters by hand all over the West end and the City and I have never forgotten my weariness in doing this on foot through hot and stifling streets of summer. I knew no one in London not a soul. How I longed for Exmoor! My only relaxation was at lunch time unless I dawdled along the streets as I often did.

Sometimes on my way to the City I would linger along the Embankment and not only enjoy the sight of the barges and tugs and steamers passing up or down, but the wonderful golden mudbanks on the south side when the tide was low glorified by the sun in the early morning with their background of foundry chimneys one crowned with a red lion, riverside warehouses and wharfs. Or I would try to see what Wordsworth saw from Westminster Bridge, but Charing Cross railway bridge had spoilt all that. Nevertheless from Hungerford Bridge, the iron foot bridge which runs along with Charing Cross bridge; from that hideous platform I had a magnificent view down stream of the City and St. Paul's; and London, always subject to every mood of its changing sky seemed to me – for what did I know – the most beautiful, the most wonderful city in the world, full of the mystery of life. There it lay under that great dome crowned by its golden cross surrounded by its subject churches whose delicate spires seemed to sing about it in chorus and supported by the bass of the noble bridge of Waterloo there before me with flights of seagulls sweeping through the air. There were palaces too, the great and yet graceful mass of the Adelphi with its Water Gate, the splendour of Somerset House and a glimpse, or did I imagine it? – of the

Tower of London in which to the mind of a boy all the history of England was hidden and expressed.

Reluctantly I would leave all that great spectacle, the murky but majestic river, Father Thames with its glimmering gold in a misty September or October morning and go on my way. “Liquid ‘istory” John Burns called. Perhaps that was why it was so dirty.

Or on a summer day of wedded white and blue I would go along the Strand past the Golden Cross Hotel, past Charing Cross and Gatti’s long restaurant and the Exeter Arcade and Exeter Hall and the Tivoli music hall – all gone now – and the Adelphi and Vaudeville and Lyceum theatres, past Denny’s the booksellers, lovely St. Mary Le Strand into Booksellers Row and linger there among the old books on the outside stalls, large tomes in dilapidated leather, a *Missale Romanum* or a broken set of Spenser, set of old reviews or a Tasso, a set of the *Tatler* or *De Quincey* and so past St. Clement Danes and the monstrous Law Courts and the modest entry to the Temple into Fleet Street, and going very slowly I would gradually let the buildings reveal the great Dome of St. Paul’s emerging little by little its greatness emphasized and revealed by the fragile and slender spire of St. Martin on Ludgate Hill.

My only lawful relaxations were at lunch time when I would sometimes go into the National Gallery where I could sit and surreptitiously munch a sandwich, beside a woman quietly sucking her baby at the breast. I did look at the pictures but the only one that fixed itself in my mind was Giovanni Bellini’s *Agony in the Garden* and that I think because of its strange and haunting landscape and the tragic sunset over that desert-like world.

Once I went into the Aquarium which used to stand almost opposite the Abbey behind the old Westminster Hospital. A woman was then diving there from a height into a tank of water and a phrenologist among other entertainments felt one’s bumps. He felt mine but was far from reassuring. They were all in the wrong place as he announced to the amusement of the audience.

And then I discovered the theatre; not the pantomime of my childhood, but the real theatre and first and foremost among them the most beautiful theatre in London, the Haymarket where Mrs. Langtry was appearing in a play by Haddon Chambers *The Queen of Manoa*. A poor play no doubt, but I did not think so, for I fell madly in love with the most beautiful woman of her time. I went to the play five or six times – there was always a need to catch the last train back to Addiscombe – and finally wrote it out word for word from memory in admiration of the beautiful heroine to whom I sent little tributes of verse which, alas, were never acknowledged. With the possible exception of Millicent, Duchess of Sutherland, I still think Lily Langtry the most beautiful woman I have ever seen.

In the chilly autumn and winter I invariably went into Westminster Abbey at lunch time. I got to know every stone in that wonderful building, the most beautiful church in England. I bought books about it and read how it had been consecrated by St. Peter himself with angels descending in a blaze of light. Within those angels seemed to be everywhere not only those under the roses in the transepts but everywhere if one looked up. And I would stand at the end of the nave and try to imagine what it must have been to see from there the shrine of St. Edward with its golden coffin rising up in all its glory surrounded by the many silver lamps behind and above the High Altar.

On Mondays and I think on Tuesdays one could go without payment and unaccompanied into the ambulatory and its radiating chapels, including those of St. Edward and Henry VII. I knew every [_____] in the Isiah [sic] Chapel and the device of an Eye and a man slipping up a tree. I knew the lovely tombs in St. Edward’s Chapel of Prince John of Eltham and of the Duchess of Suffolk and others but the most beautiful thing there was the tomb of William de Valence the effigy covered with gilded armour. And on the east wall of the chapel in the spandrel was a lovely sculpture of the fourteenth century.

Then there was the tomb of Sir Giles Danbury in St. Paul's Chapel and on the soles of the feet of his effigy two monks saying the rosary. I lingered in the Poets' Corner where Chaucer lay in his altar tomb and where there was a bust of Longfellow on which the Americans used to leave cards.

But it was the Chapel and Shrine of St. Edward which preoccupied me most. Was he not my patron saint and did not his feast fall on the thirteenth of the month? But the Shrine once so marvellous that nothing in Europe equalled it according to Trevisano the fifteenth century Venetian Ambassador – so I had read – was nothing but a stump.

And then there were the tombs of the Plantagenets: that of Henry III the refounder of the Abbey a wonderful work of Italian art of the thirteenth century in three tiers covered with mosaic half picked out by vandals with its great slabs of purple porphyry and its discs of the same green marble and its beautiful effigy of the King in gilded bronze. Then the Tomb of Edward I, a mighty sarcophagus of grey stone a [_____] without effigy or inscription; then that of Edward III with its astonishing figure of the long bearded king in gilded bronze and its little gilded bronze weepers. And then that of Richard II the last of the great line with its effigies in gilded bronze of the murdered King and his beloved Anne of Bohemia, his consort.

And then and best of all the tomb of Queen Eleanor the wife of Edward I with its effigy of splendid and serene beauty in gilded bronze with its beautiful grille over the ambulatory.

There they are; unique in the world for the French Revolution destroyed the similar tombs of the Kings of France and not one remains.

I was never able to see properly the tombs of Aveline of Lancaster, Aymer de Valence and Edmund Crouchback for they were in the sanctuary; but the tombs about the desecrated shrine of St. Edward were enough⁵. Indeed the tomb of Queen Eleanor, so beautiful was it, often brought tears to my eyes and one day noticing my emotion an American lady out of sympathy and curiosity patted my shoulder and asked "Are you related?"

Related? But the very name of Plantagenet has disappeared from the world. As Lord Chief Justice Carew said in the famous Oxford pedigree case in 1622: "Where is Bohun: Where is Mowbray? Where is Mortimer? Nay which is more and most of all, where is Plantagenet? The urns and sepulchres of mortality have entombed them."

I used to like to enter the quiet church by the little door in the Poets' Corner which, still, has about it something of old romance. It was by that door they carried in a litter the dying King Henry IV. As they bore him in from the Palace of Westminster between which and the Abbey Henry III had planted an orchard of pear trees that he might see the Gothic over the pear blossom in spring, an equerry ran to enquire of a sweeper cleaning the transept where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved that day. The sweeper threw down his broom and ran to find out and returning said the Blessed Sacrament was on the High Altar. Thither they bore the King and tipped him out of the litter before the High Altar where he prostrated himself, a foreign thing to do. As he lay there he had a seizure and they carried him onto the Jerusalem Chamber and there he died. A strange thing: for as a penance for his usurpation the Pope had laid on him the Pilgrimage to Jerusalem. This he had never done for some witch or soothsayer had prophesied that he would die in Jerusalem, and so he did.

And it was demanded of the Abbots that the King should lie with the Plantagenets in the Chapel of St. Edward. But the Abbot and his monks not wishing to admit to such a place the usurper and murderer of the late King Richard II answered there was no room.

⁵ The other Plantagenet Kings lie away from Westminster; Henry II and Richard Coeur de Lion in the Abbey of Fonteville in Normandy; John in Worcester Cathedral, Edward II in a wonderful shrine in Gloucester Cathedral. But the body of King Edward V is in a coffin in Henry VII's Chapel.

So the body of the King was borne by barge down the Thames to Canterbury where he was to lie with the Black Prince. But on the way a great storm arose to the peril of the barge. And the sailors said: "We have a Jonah on board." And they took the body of the King and threw it into the Thames and filled the coffin with rubble. And that is what lies at Canterbury.

Such is the legend. And in this and others I revelled as I stole about the great Church.

Now when his son King Henry V came to his early death, he was the darling of England because of Agincourt.

And again the demand was made of the Abbot that the King should lie with the Plantagenets and again the Abbot answered there was no room.

But Henry V was the victor of Agincourt and the Abbot was persuaded.

So they built a bridge over the Ambulatory for his Chantry so that his head might lie within the Chapel of St. Edward and Mass of Requiem was said there for the repose of his soul and the Ruby of Agincourt shone there in his helmet.

But since those days when they buried Harry V the last King to lie in the Chapel of St. Edward the great Church has suffered many changes. I do not mean the outrageous vandalism of the new façade of the royal Entry of the north transept, but the fact that it has ceased to be Catholic; all the altars in the chapels have been overthrown. It is scarcely any longer a church to the honour of God, but with its overwhelming crowd of monuments to the honour of men, it is just a museum of late English sculpture. Its traditional purpose only really appears at a Coronation and annually on October 13 the feast of St. Edward Confessor when by the kindness and generosity of the Dean and Chapter the entry to the shrine of St. Edward is free, so that those of the old religion may gather there as they do, somewhat to the embarrassment of the vergers, to pray at the shrine, the only one left in England out of so many places where the body of the saint remains and the veneration of the faithful still mounts up to heaven.

Yet perhaps it was here in the most beautiful church in England, alienated from the Faith which built it, spoiled and robbed and desecrated that I first learned to love those works of art among which so much of my life was to be spent. And so those many months with Mr. Rideal were not altogether wasted.

For I had had enough of my "publisher". I used to fail to turn up, to stay at home and buy and read the books of the Nineties, Oscar Wilde, Richard Le Gallienne, John Davidson, Henry Harland, Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dowson, Arthur Symons, the Yellow Book and above all Aubrey Beardsley. Indeed I ran up a bill with a bookseller in buying these books which my dear Mother generously paid for me later.

Disheartened and desperate at last and fearing a family conference with Mr. Munton very hostile at my failure to appreciate his publisher, I plucked up my courage and wrote to John Lane the publisher of the Nineties and asked him if I might come and see him.

Chapter IV

When Mr. John Lane read my letter and learned from it that I had come from the West Country and had been at Blundell's he was touched in his tenderest spot for he was passionately devoted to his native Devon, where, in 1854 he had been born and had been to school at Hartland, where under the tower of St. Nectan's great church he was to be buried.

I went to call on him at the Bodley Head (Sir Thomas Bodley, the founder of the Bodleian Library was also a Devonshire man) where he had lately set up business at the head of the Albany in Vigo Street. He was good enough to take me on at once and presently I took him down to Old Blundell's and introduced him to my mother. Of course he was enchanted by her, and delighted with Old Blundell's.

Johnny Lane came of humble parents and for many years had been a clerk in the GWR Clearing House. There he found a fellow Devonian, Elkin Matthews. Together they published Richard Le Gallienne's Volumes in Folio of the Rhymer's Club (the second contained Ernest Dowson's "Cynara"), and among other poetry "The Eloping Angels" by William Watson.

Then in 1894 Lane left Elkin Matthews, a charming unworldly and scholarly man, taking with him the sign of the Bodley Head and most of the poets and authors, crossed the street and set up on his own at the head of the Albany passage. The office consisted of a single room not very large, one wall covered with bookshelves; across it stretched a long double sided desk at which two clerks sat, one of whom was Mitchell Kennerley who later managed Lane's New York publishing house, and became well known in the book world of New York. In a partitioned corner of the room sat Frederic Chapman, Lane's literary adviser and manager, a man of great charm and ability. Lane had an apartment adjoining this office at the head of the Albany and that was all. It was thus after the gloom and frustration of my life since I left Blundell's, a very happy time began. For there I was in the headquarters of the so-called Decadent Movement of the Nineties. It is true I was there only as an apprentice learner and only 18 but John Lane was a generous master and with a view to the future favoured me and introduced me to most of his authors and to the one genius of his clients, Aubrey Beardsley. I never was intimate with any of them except Richard Le Gallienne, who became a great friend of mine and was most kind to me. When he knew how anxious I was to become a writer he took me down to the Star office and introduced me there. He was then writing a weekly column of literary criticism for that paper.

I was able to accept their generous offer to join their staff on trial and as a learner because I had to get up every morning at six a.m. and was free before nine. I remember as the first morning James Douglas who afterwards became famous in the *Sunday Express* for his sentimental articles, took me out to breakfast in Fleet Street. But my connection with the Star did not last long as I found it impossible to wake up in time to be so early at Shoe Lane. It lasted, however, long enough for me to be allowed to write a tiny leader for the paper greeting *The Times* publication of Literature, the forerunner of the T.L.S.

But what wonderful days those were! The little halfpenny evening paper the *Star* had then on its staff Richard La Gallienne for books, A.B. Walkley for the theatre and G.B. Shaw for music. T.P. O'Conner was editing the Sun and other halfpenny papers were open to literary articles as was the halfpenny *Echo*. *The Globe*, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Westminster Gazette*, the *St. James Gazette* and other penny evening journals not only largely reviewed books but were open to print and pay for articles on subjects of all sorts written by educated men for educated and civilized readers. Not one such evening paper exists in London, or perhaps could exist, today.

The Saturday Review, edited by Frank Harris and then by Harold Hodge had on its staff "Max", D.S. Macoll, J.F. Runciman and G.B.S. and was largely devoted to literature. One also misses it sadly today as one does the *Speaker*, Henley's *National Observer*, and the *Catholic Weekly*

Register and the Anglican *Guardian*. Monthly Reviews such as Blackwood's Magazine, *Macmillan's Magazine*, the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Contemporary Review* and the large quarterlies flourished and there were other periodicals too no longer in existence devoted to *litterae humaniores* such as the Athenaeum, the Academy and the Literary World represented today only by the T.L.S.

Among the morning dailies the *Daily Chronicle* was outstanding and so was the *Morning Post* for the space they gave to books. I seem to recall a review in the former by Swinburne of Kenneth Graham's *Golden Age*, a Bodley Head Book. The public which bought and read these papers seems no longer to exist. Does the decline in general culture date from the first World War or was that war a symptom of it?

Meanwhile at the Bodley Head we were publishing and in delightful format John Davidson's *Ballads and Songs* (1894) in which are to be found perhaps his best known verses, the Ballad of a Nun, and the Fleet Street Ecloquire (1895), Le Gallienne's *English Poems and Prose Fancies*, the Keynotes series, headed by George Egerton, each volume with a cover design and title page by Aubrey Beardsley, G.S. Street's *Autobiography of a Boy* and perhaps the only masterpieces not forgotten are by Oscar Wilde, the *Sphinx* and *Salome*, the latter illustrated and so criticized and its binding designed by Aubrey Beardsley, two volumes of whose incomparable and original drawings were to be published later.

And then the *Yellow Book*. *The Yellow Book*, a quarterly, was only a banner of the Nineties in its remarkable binding, designed by Aubrey Beardsley with its drawings by Beardsley in the first volumes. Its letterpress was quite uncharacteristic except perhaps for an article by Max Beerbohm entitled "A Defence of Cosmetics" and might have appeared anywhere. Max, however, had little to do with the so-called Decadent Movement, except that he was the satirist of the Victorian era and himself an exquisite and very mannered artist straight from the Oxford of Walter Pater, whom however he caricatured. He would appear at the Bodley Head in frock coat banded top hat, black tie and gloves, perfectly turned out; "Are you in mourning Mr. Beerbohm?" "For my sins."

But Aubrey Beardsley was another matter. He may appear today as the very embodiment of the Decadent Movement but he would have repudiated both the Movement and its title with the very sharp common sense that was part of his character. He was with the possible exception of Oscar Wilde the one man of genius of the Nineties. Nothing like his drawings had ever been seen before, or has been seen since. Of course I saw him and most of those writing at that time only as they came and went at the Bodley Head. Beardsley was always dressed in a tweed lounge suit very smart and neat but nothing could have been more striking than his appearance and his personality. His tall thin figure, his long, drawn, boney and melancholy face, his eyes, his curious brown straight hair, in a fringe cut straight just above his eyebrows and his strangely beautiful hands with their long fingers, at once arrested you, and in the office of the Bodley Head we one and all awaited his drawings with eager interest – not only for their extraordinary beauty of line and execution but because one was always expecting something there which Lane would insist on cutting out, as indeed he did, unfortunately as I think in these masterpieces supposed to be illustrations to Wilde's *Salome*, which by the way Beardsley regarded with a sort of contempt, a satirical sneer so well expressed in the tail-piece he added to the play.

Beardsley seemed to be a figure apart. Most of his contemporary writers he either despised or didn't like except perhaps Max Beerbohm. Arthur Symons who greatly admired him and wrote the best study of him after his early death, he was ready to work with, as in the Savoy, but they were never friends. There was a hard eighteenth century common sense in Beardsley that none of his contemporaries of the Nineties possessed, and yet no one was more ready to upset the epater les bourgeois but he was a sick man from the beginning, slowly dying of T.B. unable to enjoy the life of the time as he feverishly longed to do, and finally dying of his lamentable disease in 1898 in Menton, where he is buried and where Norman Douglas and I have so often visited his grave in

the camposanto under the solitary cypress in the France he loved and within sight of Italy. He was only 26.

The other man possibly of genius was of course Oscar Wilde. I can say little of Oscar for I knew him so little but I have often listened to him talking. There was and has been nothing comparable with it at that time or since that time. The only talk similar but far away I have ever listened to was that of Gabriele D'Annunzio. Beautiful though that was it lacked the charm, the exquisite imagination of Oscar's monologues which I am sure we should never hear again till we meet him in the Elysian fields. There was too, I felt, something uncanny, almost supernatural in his incredible charm. It was in Oscar's talk, it has often been said, that his real genius lay. His poems are inferior to those of his friend Lord Alfred Douglas and to Dowson's. His plays are really melodramas except the last: *The Importance of Being Ernest*.

Ernest Dowson (1867-1900) wrote the one poem of the Nineties which is universally remembered still "Non sum quails eram bonae sub regno Cyanarae". Unhappy, miserable creature, unkempt, even dirty he yet appeared in Vigo Street now and then not without respect but he was more at home with Leonard Smithers than with John Lane. Smithers in fact loved him, even, as I believe, deprived himself to serve him.

Another figure which even when the Nineties were all over came to some fame was George Moore (1852-1931) who at this time was already a well known novelist; his first work, *A Modern Lover*, appeared in 1883, was a friend of Arthur Symons, the best critic that the Nineties produced. But as far as I am concerned one meeting with George Moore was enough. His scatological conversation to say nothing of his childish ignorance: "What is an hexameter? Well, this is an hexameter of sorts: 'I was walking one day in the Strand and thought I'd get into a hansom'", disgusted and bored me. Moore thought his talk and its subjects were "realistic". He was mistaken. They were emetic. Oscar was quite right when he was asked if he knew George Moore to reply: "I knew him so well that I have not spoken to him for ten years."

And then in strong contrast there was Richard Le Gallienne, Lane's favourite author and protégé. Johnny Lane would do anything for Richard Le Gallienne, the kindest, most romantic and most sentimental figure of the Nineties and as far removed from any Decadent Movement as the east is from the west. At this time he had just lost his first wife, perhaps the only woman he had ever really loved of all his romances. I was somewhat in awe of him, he looked so poetical with his dark curly long hair, his flopping silk tie, his large black felt hat and robe of an overcoat down to his ankles. He was infinitely kind to me. I remember one time at Lynmouth, where he was with the Scandinavian lady who became his second wife, we would wander by the Lynn and he would read poetry to us and the verse and the stream and his voice made a polyphonic music of enchantment which I shall never forget and which to one of my years seemed and was a high privilege.

Of the author of *Grey Roses* and "The Cardinal's Snuff Box" then editor of the "*Yellow Book*" (Why?) I have no recollection. And I only remember Lionel Johnson, the poet of "By the Statue of King Charles at Charing Cross", whose poems were published by Elkin Matthews in 1895, for he had not followed John Lane across the street, in a glimpse I once caught of him on a high stool in a pub in Fleet Street.

How many of these writers of the Nineties became Catholics? Lionel Johnson when he left Winchester, Ernest Dowson too, and Henry Harland, Aubrey Beardsley in his last year, Oscar on his death bed, and Alfred Douglas. Nearly all died young and with tragic ends.

And then there was Baron Corvo. This extraordinary and unhappy apparition appeared in Vigo Street from no one knew where in 1895, when one of his exquisite short stories: "About San Pietro and San Paulo" appeared in the *Yellow Book*. This, with others, were afterwards published in a small square paperback volume with the title of "Stories Toto took [sic] me" in 1898, and again

with additions only in the same image in 1901. I was to meet Corvo again in Italy, in Florence in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Kenworthy-Brown at Settignano. Mr. F.W. Rolfe, for that was his real name was a disastrous figure and looked it. His beautiful and most original books: *In His Own Image*, *Chronicles of the House of Borgia* had about as much chance of selling in England as if they had been written in Latin. He was starving or nearly so, and, having missed his vocation to become a priest in the Scots College in Rome, he had taken a post with the Sforza-Cesarini family, lords of Santa Fiora on Mont'Amiata and been unable to keep it. Again and again he appeared in London only to disappear, and, as A.J.A. Symons has revealed, only to die of starvation as a sort of gondolier in Venice. It is easy to say he had no enemies but himself and certainly he was his own enemy, but his friends, such as they were, were no use to him and one of them, Robert Hugh Benson, seems to have taken his ideas, which were original enough, and worked them up into sensational novels such as *The Lord of the World* with a vulgarity which Baron Corvo would never have allowed himself. He used to say that the Barony was an Italian one attached to certain property given him by Sforza-Cesarini but the truth is that his name was Rolfe and rolfe in our tongue means raven, and the Latin for raven is corvus, in Italian Corvo – as the English poet John Skelton had it in “the raven called rolfe”.

I never heard anyone speak kindly of Corvo and very few of Arthur Symons who was always a lonely figure to the very end of his catastrophic life and who was to become an intimate and dear friend of mine. He was the best critic of the time. In those days he was constantly with George Moore. They would often be together at the Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts where Moore was trying to learn something more about music than Mrs. Craigie (John Oliver Hobbes) had taught him, with a view to writing “Evelyn Innes”. I avoided them both for I could not stand Moore. But later Symons became a close friend and neighbour in St. John's Wood. I remember we spent the morning together walking up and down Hamilton Terrace the day before he started on that disastrous journey to Venice.

Arthur Symons with the exception of Aubrey Beardsley who would have repudiated it or perhaps Hubert Crackanthorpe, the only real decadent of the so-called Decadent Movement and as such and as a critic he is of some importance.

I first knew Symons through Le Gallienne. He was then living in the Temple in Fountain Court where in 1893 he had entertained Paul Verlaine who had contributed a poem to, I think the St. James's Gazette and had been paid, I think, five pounds for it. On receiving the money, Verlaine exclaimed “I haf money I will haf pleasure”. But the pleasure turned out to be only a glass of gin.

After his marriage in 1901 to his charming wife Rhoda, they lived in a flat in Maida Vale and then in a delightful small house in Clifton Hill, St. John's Wood and, in 1908, they bought a cottage in Wattersham in Kent and it was in that year the catastrophe befell him.

The basic facts of Arthur Symons life are simple. Born in Wales of Cornish stock, the son of a Methodist minister, he went to various schools as his father was moved about the West Country; in fact he was largely self-educated. At the age of twenty-one he published his first book, a study on Browning which the poet acknowledged and Walter Pater reviewed in the Guardian. It was dedicated to George Meredith. There followed a long series of books of verse and criticism.

As a poet, though he himself valued his verse above his prose, Symons might seem inferior to several of his contemporaries – Yeats, Dowson, Alfred Douglas, Housman – for all his technical perfection. Those verses – his best known – in *London Nights* celebrate encounters one may think largely if not wholly imaginary, it may be as imaginary as the loves sung in the Elizabethan *amoretti*, here inspired by Verlaine's fragile lyrics. For Arthur Symons was far too shy, far too sensitive and fastidious to be a Don Juan of the pavement, or even of the music hall. So shy, so sensitive that he would walk for half an hour up and down outside Messrs. Dent's publishing house before he could bring himself to go in and ask old Mr. Dent for a cheque due or even overdue.

It was as a critic he was superior to any of his time. As Desmond MacCarthy said, he was “one of the subtlest critics now writing here or abroad”, and even today Dame Edith Sitwell recognizes that “he was a great critic... now most unwisely neglected.” More over he was the chief if not the only interpreter of the French poetry of the time in England. He knew Verlaine, Mallarme, Huysmans, Remy de Gourmont, Andre Gide, Jammes and the young Symbolist poets, and Rodin and Blanche, and he was the introducer and translator of Baudelaire. Perhaps it was this which had something to do with the catastrophe of 1908 when he suddenly went mad in Venice, where he and his wife were guests in the Palazzo Desdemona, and wandering about Italy was thrown into prison, was brought back to England and signed over as insane by Dr. Risien Russell and locked up in an asylum in North London.

There was, he himself declared, madness in his family. And then sensitive as he was, sophisticated and aesthetic without any definite religion, he was, nevertheless, secretly obsessed by his Methodist upbringing, its Calvinist predestination and hell-fire. Much of his more original work attests it. All this was emphasized when he fell under the fascination of Paul Verlaine, who was himself obsessed by a sense of sin, and then under the spell of Baudelaire. Pity he did not make friends with Anatole France.

It may be Symons' breakdown in 1908 was due to his overwork and anxiety about money. It may be so; and it is true that even in those days when there were three or four monthly reviews and six or seven weekly periodicals devoted to literature and civilized writing for a cultured public, it was impossible to live by one's pen as a freelance, if one kept one's standard and integrity as a man of letters, which is what Symons proposed to do. Still it takes more than worry about money to give a man GPI or many of us would be suffering from it now. However, it was there in Venice that the astonishing breakdown occurred, to be followed a few years later by as astonishing a recovery.

As a man Arthur Symons was loveable and modest, a delightful companion, a loyal friend. As an artist he had a noble integrity that poverty could not shake which never failed him. In appearance before the catastrophe he was strikingly handsome, with a rosy complexion and a notable head. And after it, as in the portrait by Augustus John, he looked like one risen from the dead, grand, majestic, lonely and alone, in the Café Royal. He was always a lonely figure.

But there were other poets in those years who had nothing to do with the Nineties. In 1893 Kipling's *Barrack Room Ballads* with many unforgettable and altogether original verses which are still remembered and alive, among them, “The Road to Mandalay”. Kipling was a man of genius and the most original and remarkable writer of the end of the nineteenth century.

Still in the Nineties “Admirals All” by Henry Newbolt appeared and I remember when “Drake's Drum” first appeared in, I think, the *St. James Gazette*, how Frederic Chapman praised it. He tried to get Newbolt for the Bodley Head but was forestalled this time by Elkin Matthews and “Admirals All” with “Drake's Drum” appeared in Elkin Matthews shilling Garland Series in 1897. In that Series too, appeared Stephen Phillip's *Christ in Hades* which with his plays in verse took London by storm till someone exposed their rhetoric and shallowness.

Best of all, in 1896 appeared *A Shropshire Lad* by A.E. Housman from the publishers Kegan Paul, which Lane again urged by Frederic Chapman tried to get for the Bodley Head but was outwitted by Grant Richards who had just set up as a publisher in Covent Garden, where the firms of Macmillan, Heineman and Dent flourished with many others including Chapman and Hall.

I had then read and largely got by heart *The Renaissance* by Walter Pater and was deep in *Marius The Epicurean*, and like my friend Bernard Berenson later, I still regard Pater as the greatest, even the only aesthetic critic that has ever written in English. *The Renaissance* maybe has some wrong attributions of the pictures of that time, but no other book gives one the sense, the spirit and the atmosphere of the art of that wonderful awakening and certainly no book, not even one

by Newman, is written in such musical prose: "For the essence of Humanism is that belief of which he seems never to have doubted that nothing which has interested living man and women can wholly lose its vitality; no language they have spoken, no oracle beside which they have hushed their voices, no dream which has ever been entertained by actual human minds, nothing about which they have ever been passionate or expended time and zeal".

Where else can you find things like that?

And then *Marius*. How many times have I read *Marius*? Berenson told me he had read it eight times.

The Renaissance and *Marius* made me long for Italy and this longing for Italy became almost an obsession when Frederick Chapman gave me *John Inglesant*. There are three English novels or romances which seem to me to stand alone; nothing like them is to be found in European literature. They are *Esmond* by Thackeray, *Marius the Epicurean* by Walter Pater and *John Inglesant* by J.H. Shorthouse. They all have something in common.

Esmond is the finest historical novel in the English language. The other two are full of Italy.

As I read Pater I began to frequent the National Gallery, and to love the Italian pictures of the xiv and xv centuries. I also started with the help of the Hugo System Primer to learn Italian and attended a school of languages, where I think Pino Orioli who later became my friend and the friend of Norman Douglas and the heir of Reggie Turner was employed.

And then too I frequented the theatre three or four times a week. I was at all Oscar's first nights generally in the pit. I was at the first night of Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* and Mrs. Ebbsmith and at Henry Arthur Jones's *The Liars* to name no others. How delighted they all were and if none are great dramatic literature where is their equal today?

Only last year I went to Keith Prowse and asked for a stall in any "drawing room comedy". "Drawing room Comedy? Drawing room Comedy?" they said. "No sir, we have nothing of that sort." Of course not, most of the plays today are not comedies and take place in the kitchen if not in the lavatory.

Many were the "first nights" I went to at the Lyceum where the greatest romantic actor of that or any other age was then appearing with Ellen Terry most charming of heroines. I saw everything that was to be seen at the Lyceum even *Don Quixote* but not *Hamlet*. Irving became a sort of god.

It was there too in the Lyceum, if I remember aright, I first heard the golden voice of Sarah Bernhardt at some charity performance. For all some will have it and though she was Italian, Duse, to my mind was nothing beside Sarah and if you have seen Sarah in *Phaedre* and Duse in *La Dame aux Camelias* you will know why.

It was on one of those occasions and in the theatre that I was introduced to a young man about my own years who was to become a great friend of mine. This was Horace M. Miles who was working in his father's business as a tea merchant. We presently began to meet frequently going to the theatre or a concert together and, though we had much the same tastes he didn't care for Pater and I didn't care for Mr. Henry James; we both were enthusiastic for George Meredith, both as poet and novelist, and Thomas Hardy. Horace introduced me to two other men and we were to frequent the theatre together but one and all they presently vanished to Canada or the United States.

I was at that time living in rooms in Church Row in Hampstead, a quiet Georgian semi cul de sac with the old Parish church at the end. I had bought and erected on the roof an astronomical telescope with a 3 inch object glass and there I used to voyage among the stars. Church Row was unfrequented then. Today I suppose it is a car park and London then lay a mystery of darkness at

my feet. Today with all the electric illuminations an astronomical telescope would be useless in Church Row.

Very soon Horace introduced me to his family who lived in the neighbourhood; his father and mother, his two sisters and younger brother, the last at school. Often the four of us would go together to a concert at the Queen's Hall and would walk back home through Regent's Park, and often his mother would invite me to spend the week-end with them, especially after we had been together to the theatre and had come home in the old Hampstead omnibus with the three horses up Haverstock Hill on its last journey. Sometimes we would play croquet in the garden or go for a walk on the Heath. Or on Sunday go up to Maidenhead and spend the day in a couple of punts after gathering with the crowd of others at Boulter's Lock.

I owe much to Horace; at first sight I had fallen in love with his elder sister Charlotte and was determined to marry her if I could. No, I cannot describe her. She had a gentle and exquisite air that set off her beauty; very calm and desirable and an enhancement of life.

But the Nineties were dying. It was in 1894 quite suddenly came the great crash; the scandal and the fall of Oscar Wilde which was to bring the world I was living in to an end. Everyone knows the tragic story; I shall not record it yet again. The folly of the libel action, the further folly of refusing to leave the country, the mounting tragedy of the trials, the inevitable verdict, the savage cruelty of the sentence, the outrageous and shameful scenes outside the Old Bailey, the *sauve qui peut*. Lane went off to America.

Slowly but inevitably the Decadent Movement which was rather a mood than a movement, vanished. Philistinism resumed its sway.

I was the youngest person who had anything to do with the Nineties. Max was next, born in 1872, I in 1875. And now I must be almost the oldest survivor.

In 1895 John Lane was faced by William Watson, the Wordsworthian poet, with an ultimatum that he, Lane, must choose between him, Watson, and Aubrey Beardsley, the wizard of the *Yellow Book*. Lane foolishly, as I thought, chose Watson and Arthur Symons went off and found the curious creature Leonard Smithers as a publisher with whom he and Beardsley were to produce *The Savoy*, the rival of *The Yellow Book*, which, henceforth without Beardsley became rather boring which no one had any special reason to buy. But it is probable that at that moment no other publisher than Smithers ("I'll publish anything the others cannot".) would have undertaken such an enterprise as Symons and Beardsley proposed. In fact when *The Savoy* appeared it was either ignored or treated shamefully by the Press and came to an end with Beardsley's death in 1898.

All this had been a great shock to me. It had been tacitly understood that when I came of age as I did in 1896, I should put about 5000 pounds into Lane's project to found a publishing house in New York. It is true my guardian Mr. Munton of the Law Society had always been against it, but Lane had been very kind to me and I fully intended to do as he proposed and wished. But when he threw Beardsley out I was disgusted and began to think that my guardian might be right. In any case I was no longer interested in a Bodley Head that was not to be of the Nineties and then it seemed all had changed for the Nineties had come to an end.

And then I had changed too, what had I been reading for the last year? Less often of the books of the Bodley Head, less often Le Gallienne's *Prose Fancies* and more and more Walter Pater's *Renaissance*; less often the Heavenly Tripos and its like and more and more *John Inglesant*; less often the stuff of the Nineties and more *Marius the Epicurean*. For I had come under the spell of Walter Pater and, indeed, knew much of *The Renaissance* by heart. I was reading and re-reading these books and it was they which rekindled in my heart the desire for Italy, for the South. I recalled my adventures with the *Sortes Virgillienne*. Indeed the only book I had never forsaken was my love for Virgil. My love for him and his verse, born in my school days at Blundell's was never to be forgotten. I had turned to him in all my vicissitudes, not only the first six books of the *Aeneid* but

the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics*. It had become a habit to read them in bed at night in place of my neglected prayers till I knew much of them by heart – even the odd numbered books of the *Aeneid* which are generally less attractive than the even though there was a special place in my heart for book III with the journey about the coasts of Italy. Virgil was the only influence I had never been untrue to; Virgil and, yes, Horace, and my favourite Ode IV.7. And in later life too sometimes when reading Dante or even the exquisite pages of the *Fioretti* or a chronicle by [?] I would suddenly realize I had nothing in common with the matter I was reading or the people I was reading about and, spurning the *Inferno*, I would see to my Virgil or the Letters of Cicero and cry [?].

And so the Bodley Head was out. I was eager for the South.

“Unstable as water thou shalt not excel”. How often my father had said that to me when I was a child. Well, so it was.

Immediately after I became of age though Lane had given me a silver cigarette case for a birthday present and without telling him that I had changed my mind, that I was not going to invest money in his business, that I was going to Italy, I wrote him. It was a cowardly thing to do and I am still ashamed of it.

My birthday was celebrated at Old Blundell’s with my Mother and my brothers and sister, and by a walk along the North Devon and Cornish coast from Clovelly to Land’s End. Very hard going it was, up and down, up and down, or so it seemed.

My own master I returned to London and went down to Ludgate Circus. For I was eager for the South.