

THE GISSING JOURNAL

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

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“Found him a genial fellow, well disposed”
The relationship between Gissing and Herbert Heaton Sturmer

Pierre Coustillas

On 6 March 1896 Gissing recorded in his diary that he had just received a “letter from a man called Sturmer” about a short story he had published in C. K. Shorter’s weekly *The Sketch*. Such an occurrence had nothing exceptional about it. Like all writers he occasionally heard from strangers about his works – from women more often than from men – and he did not invariably take the trouble of mentioning in his diary the receipt of such letters, whether interesting or futile. However, the present one proved to be of some importance, as it was the first of an exchange of correspondence that has remained for years shrouded in mystery. No effort has yet been made fully to identify the recipient of Gissing’s replies,¹ which are of exclusively literary interest; they have been ignored by biographers and critics alike, and only the barest minimum of information could be found when an opportunity to edit and publish Gissing’s diary presented itself. Sturmer does not appear in such reference works as the *Dictionary of National Biography*, *Who Was Who* or *Men of the Time*. Apparently the only readily available sources of information are *The English Catalogue* and the British Library catalogue, where his publications are puzzlingly listed along those of other Sturmers, Stürmers and von Stürmers.

Seeing that Gissing and Sturmer exchanged some twenty letters and met at least three times, it was felt some years ago that, much like the German pseudo-artist Plitt or the ebullient American journalist Brian Ború Dunne, Sturmer, although doubtless an altogether different man, must be identified in a thorough manner.² Gissing’s letters to him will be published in Volumes

VI and VII of his collected correspondence, covering the periods July 1895-November 1897 and December 1897-December 1899. Their history, as will appear later, is a fairly complex one, and its final chapter will not be written until some material, currently in private hands to all

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appearances, has reached public collections.

I

The stranger who praised “Raw Material” in early March 1896, about four months and a half after its original publication in *The Sketch*, was Herbert Heaton Sturmer, a man with strong literary interests, two years Gissing’s junior. He had so far achieved no reputation, but he had made a start recently in literary journalism, contributing in particular to *The Speaker*, a weekly journal edited by Wemyss Reid since its foundation in January 1890. The contents of Sturmer’s first letter to Gissing can be inferred from the extract of the reply that appeared in Heffers Catalogue 151: “It always gratifies me to have the truth of my writing confirmed by a competent judge, for I am so often told by the incompetent that I grossly exaggerate. I believe it all but impossible to exaggerate the worthlessness (from a domestic point of view) of the untaught London woman – she is a terrible creature – destructive to all who come nigh unto her.” A close observer of social life, Sturmer must have had some powerful incentive to approve of the picture offered by “Raw Material” of a young servant, utterly incompetent and unreliable, who might seem to have been detached, like Lou and Liz in the short story of that name, from *The Nether World*. Yet, unlike Gissing, he had never lived in the nether world.

Born on 30 December 1859 at Claines, near Droitwich, Worcestershire, Sturmer was a man of Huguenot descent who, in his privately printed volume *Some Poitevin Protestants in London: Notes about the families of Ogier from Sigournais and Creuzé of Châtellerault and Niort* (1896), wrote at great length about some of his ancestors, the French branches of them. Sturmer was an anglicised form of his name which he adopted shortly before he became acquainted with Gissing. The paternal branch of his family, the von Stürmers, was of German origin – as far back as 1756 we find one Johann Samuel von Stürmer (b. 1732), landed fresh from Frankfurt-on-Oder, marrying an English girl of London, Ann Hill. The link between Gissing’s correspondent and this remote ancestor has been neatly established. Johann’s fourth child, Samuel (b. 1763) married Louisa Ogier, the daughter of Louis Ogier and Catherine Creuzé, in 1793, whose son Frederick (born in 1804) was the grandfather of Gissing’s acquaintance. The intermediate generation was that of the Reverend Heaton Edward von Stürmer (1834-1924). The publishing habit that distinguishes the family originated, it would

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seem, in 1851, when Frederick John, born in 1829 in Oxford, who was the eldest son of Frederick, published a modest collection of verse entitled *The Plagues of Egypt*, a poem, and other pieces, a duodecimo not unlike those first two small volumes of poems published by Gissing’s father in 1851 and 1853. (Frederick John migrated to New Zealand in the 1850s and his eleven children have many descendants there to this day.) Frederick John’s father, Frederick, promptly imitated his son. The British Library catalogue has an entry under his name – *A Few Practical Sermons on Various Subjects*, London, Gainsborough and Epworth printed [1852], an imprint clearly indicative of vanity publishing – which points to his profession. He was for many years Rector of Heapham, in Lincolnshire.

[Photo of H. H. Sturmer (1859-1923)]

Of his fourth child, Heaton Edward von Stürmer (1834-1924), who eventually dropped the “von” and the umlaut from his name, various mementoes have been preserved, notably a photo of him taken in 1910. White-haired and healthy-looking, with his hat in his left hand, he sits comfortably in an armchair against a leafy background. He had by then a long career behind him. Perhaps because his father was not wealthy enough to give him the benefit of a university education, he became a nonconformist minister – official records describe him in 1860 as

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minister of the Baptist Chapel, Silver Street, Worcester. He married at Cambridge in 1858, the only one of Frederick Sturmer’s four sons whose descendants were to remain in England. J. A. Venn’s *Alumni Cantabrigienses* offers some details about him. Although he was admitted as sizar at St. John’s College on 5 July 1855 and matriculated at Michaelmas 1855, he did not pass his B.A. until 1880 and his M.A. until 1883. Meanwhile he had been ordained deacon in the Anglican Church in 1874 and had become a priest in 1875, holding appointments as curate at Wellingborough, Waterbeach, and Kentish Town successively, from 1874 to 1882, in which year he became Rector of Scotton with East Ferry, Lincolnshire, where he remained for fifteen years. The three publications in volume form – *Colchester: a Poem* (1851), a twenty-page booklet with notes and a list of subscribers, *An Historical Guide to Colchester* (1852; twice reprinted), *Christ the Divine Man: or Deity Veiled* (1880) – testify to the catholicity of his tastes. Belatedly he was appointed abroad, staying as British Chaplain in Riga, Latvia, from 1897 to 1918. Early in the two decades he spent there, now a widower, he married at St. Petersburg a Miss Owens who, according to a note in the handwriting of his granddaughter Cynthia, was a Scottish spinster born in Stockholm, who had been adopted at eight by a Russian princess, spoke many languages, travelled widely and visited all the Courts of Europe – “an aristocrat of the old school who had always been waited on hand and foot.” According to J. A. Venn, he departed from Riga on a British warship that took British residents home when the Russians attacked. Three years earlier, when German troops invaded Latvia, Heaton Edward Sturmer had become circumspect, not to say defensive, about the use of the “von” of the German nobility, and his great-grandson, Mr. Raymond Sturmer, thinks that he must have become somewhat unpopular. The last few years of his life were spent at the Homes of St. Barnabas, Dormans, East Grinstead, Surrey. When he died on 9 April 1924, aged ninety, his loneliness must have been oppressive. True, his second wife was still by his side, but all his brothers and their descendants had left England for New Zealand or Australia decades earlier, and his only son, Herbert Heaton Sturmer, had committed suicide the year before.

In the “Pedigree” he compiled in his neat handwriting,³ the latter summed up the main events of his own life: “Born 30th December 1859 in the parish of Claines, co. Worcester. Birth-register at Droitwich Registry as Herbert Heaton Sturmer. Commonly known as Von Sturmer 1867-1892 in accordance with his father’s usage of surname: educated at a dame’s school, by his father, at Leicester Grammar School (not now existing), at Wellingborough

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Grammar School, by the Reverend Owen, by the Rev. J. T. Lang of Corpus Christi Coll., by the Reverend John Paget Davies of St. Johns College, Cambridge, by James Hamblin Smith, M.A., of Gonville and Caius College, Camb. and at St. Peter’s College (Peter House), Cambridge, 1878-1881.” Sturmer’s lifelong concern for education is reflected in this long enumeration. The significant detail he omits is supplied by Venn: “Resided until 1881, but did not graduate, owing to ill health.” Only a careful comparison between the entries on father and son in *Alumni Cantabrigienses* can bring to light a most curious situation – they were students in the same

university simultaneously. Their common appetite for learning is undoubted. Frederick, their father and grandfather, had in his day been educated at Queen's College, Oxford in the 1820s.

Sturmer's activities between 1881 and the autumn of 1889 can be partly reconstructed thanks to a notebook entitled "Summary of old diaries/ H. H. S./ Poole./Sept 28th-29th: 1903."⁴ He made long stays with his parents at Scotton Rectory and apparently never tried to find an occupation. His grandson, Mr. R. C. Sturmer, writes: "He was of independent means, though not rich: he certainly dissipated what remained of any wealth that may have existed." During those years he more than once visited Cambridge, staying for weeks on end, as well as Lowestoft, Yarmouth, Southport, Pershore, Worcester, and Dartmouth. Evidence of his interest in art takes the form of visits to exhibitions. Thus in 1882: "July 10-14 London: Academy, Grosvenor"; in 1883: "Feb 22. Alma Tadema Exhib. at Grosvenor. Feb. 23 Rossetti Exhib. at Academy." From 1884 onwards the entries are fewer and more laconic, as though he had no event of interest to record, and very few names that might be those of friends crop up. The only notable entries concern his mother, who was taken ill in June 1888 and died on 5 December of the same year, and two undated visits to Mrs. Jefferies, the widow of Richard Jefferies (1848-1887), the writer and naturalist, best remembered for *Bevis* and *The Story of My Heart*, with whom he corresponded for some time. Already references to his health indicate that his temperament and his outlook upon the world may have been seriously affected by an intermittent invalidism, first apparent in his Cambridge days. Mr. R. C. Sturmer, to whom his grandfather is only a shadowy figure since he died before his own father's marriage, infers from his perusal of the "Summary of old diaries" and other papers in his possession that Herbert Heaton Sturmer was "an austere, cold, humourless person who may well have been a hypochondriac." One feels that the remedy to this might have consisted in some absorbing professional activity. He was obviously one of

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those Victorians – vide Bernard Kingcote in *Isabel Clarendon* – whose ideal of a leisurely life unconnected with any form of material work was a socially and morally alienating factor in their own existence. Yet he was not an idle man for all that. If in some ways he was out of touch with the active world and its harsh realities, his cultural standard was impressive and his books, stories and articles are unquestionably the work of a distinguished artistic temperament, of a man with strict, if not rigid, principles who cared for accuracy and knew the virtue of self-restraint. These are qualities that were undoubtedly appreciated by Gissing; the fragment we have of his first letter to Sturmer suggests as much.

On 28 September 1889 he sailed to Barbados, where he landed on 19 October. The reason for this apparently sudden departure for the West Indies is unknown, but he must have been introduced by friends to a number of influential local people who are mentioned, though only from 1891 onwards, in his "Summary." The entries for late 1889 are obscure, and perhaps only refer to his successive residences: "Icehouse Oct 19th/Oct 26 – 'Central' – Nov 15-18 Charnocks./ Icehouse Dec 3." For the next year, 1890, he was content to write down: "Jan 31-Dec 31 Barbados." The turning-point in his life occurred on 28-29 January 1891, when he attended a ball at Government House, the home of Sir Walter Joseph Sendall (1832-1904), who, after spending over a decade in Ceylon, had been appointed governor-in-chief of the Windward Islands on their separation from Barbados in 1885 and transferred to Barbados in 1889. Herbert Sturmer was on that occasion introduced to Henrietta Robinson, the elder daughter and eldest child of Edward Robinson, who was Headmaster of the Blue Coat School, York, a school for foundlings founded in 1705, and Joan Robinson, née Williams, of Darlington. Aged twenty-eight, Henrietta was an art mistress at Queen's College, Barbados. Mutual sympathy must have been immediate. It is reflected in Sturmer's love letters, which are still in the hands of the family, as well as the "Summary" which lists the main events of the next few weeks:

Feb. 13. Called on her.
Feb 18. Engagement call.
Feb 22. I dined Q. C. etc.
March 15. Drive to Dr. Walets.
April 5. Banns at Cathedral.
April 9. Dance on board H.M.S. Bellerophon.
April 25. Married at Cathedral. House.⁵

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The couple spent the next two years in the West Indies. It seems that Sturmer left his wife on 5 December, thereafter travelling from island to island – Montserrat, Martinique, Montserrat again, St. Kitts, Antigua and Montserrat for the last time. There on 6 January 1892 Henrietta joined him; there too, the couple's first child, "C.C.S.A.S.," that is Cynthia Claire Sibylle Annette Sturmer, was born on 30 April.⁶ The family sailed for England in the spring of 1893, but not all together, for the "Summary" reads: "April 27 Wife & Cynthia sailed. May I sailed." The rest of the entries for 1893 suggests that a permanent home was not found immediately: "St Paul's Vicarage./ York [the home of Henrietta's father?]/ ARR's Hazelville/ Dec 31. Tudor Road." Meanwhile a second child, Lancelot Paul René Sturmer, was born on 1 September.⁷ Perhaps the romance of love had by then given way to the more prosaic course of daily life – a common enough experience – but Henrietta preserved a poem which must have meant something to her. It was written shortly after the last item in the batch of love letters, addressed to "Dearest Wife" by "Your loving Husband" and dated 12 June 1891:

The Philosopher in Love

We play with words, we human things,
Say "Joy" and "Love" and "Life":
What need of three where one will do?
All three I find in "Wife."

Herbert H. v S.
July 1891

The information supplied by the "Summary" helps us to fill the gap between the family's settling at 42 Tudor Road, Hackney, late in 1893 and March 1896, when he first wrote to Gissing. We see him recording domestic worries of the kind Gissing himself occasionally mentioned in his diary and letters. For instance, "Jan 4 [1894] Tap and W.C. frozen. Jan 9. Pipe burst." Four months later he lectured on W. I. [Washington Irving?] at St. Paul's School, and he met a future acquaintance of Gissing's, Hagberg Wright, the librarian of the London Library, in October. Fresh signs of bad health crop up again in places in 1895 – "bronchitis," "In bed Mch 1-8," "May 6-9 Pleurodynia," but that was also the year when he began to write for the press. On 17 August he notes the publication of a letter from his pen (dated from the Primrose Club) to the editor of the *Speaker* on "Tory Manners,"⁸ and an article on Richard Jefferies in the

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Westminster Gazette for 16 September (he was later to send it to Gissing), which was also printed in some unidentified journal (with a name abbreviated to B.) on 27 September. The *Speaker* must have welcomed his work. Three more pieces that are more descriptive than narrative have been exhumed from its files – "The Tropics of Jermyn Street," with characteristic allusions to Montserrat, Richard Jefferies, Ruskin, Schopenhauer and Kipling (15 February

1896, pp. 184-85); “The Princess of Limette,” an exotic story which Gissing was invited to read (10 October 1896, pp. 390-91), “A Lover of France,” a fantasy inspired by his French ancestry and his mixed feelings about the University he had left without a degree (3 April 1897, pp. 375-76) and “The Heart of a Gentleman,” with its symbolic opening sentence: “The Rector’s favourite window was also the oldest in the house” and a laudatory quotation from Jefferies (24 July 1897, pp. 96-98).

The year 1896 was for Sturmer an eventful one during which he made headway in different domains and suffered handicaps reminiscent of Gissing’s own difficulties. A third child, Lionel Cruzé Ogier,⁹ was born in his household on 25 January (Alfred Gissing was born on 20 January). After two successive changes of abode since his settling at 42 Tudor Road, he moved again twice – on 17 April from 16 Milman Street, Chelsea to 31 Algarve Road, S.W., on 8 September to 147 Amesbury Avenue, Streatham Hill. An entry which reads “Oct 3. Jane vanished” seems to point to some difficulty with a servant, and “the chimney & stove troubles” that plagued him from October to December as well as the “rheumatic inflammation of eyes” in the same period speak for themselves. His main satisfaction must have come from the publication, at his own expense, of the genealogical study of his Poitevin ancestors, *Some Poitevin Protestants in London*. It is a meticulously thorough enquiry into the history of a Huguenot family to which several years’ work must have been devoted. It reads like the book of a proud man prone to self-justification and to moral-pointing, also to telltale digressions. The dedication is an index to the spirit in which the enquiry was conducted, revealing another interest of the author – the role played by Huguenots in the development of early American civilization: “To the memory of those Officers of French descent who fought for the CONFEDERATE States of America, especially to the memory of GENERAL BEAUREGARD (not a Huguenot) whose brilliant valour and wisdom were laid so cheerfully and modestly upon the white altar of a righteous cause, an Englishman dedicates this little book. Primrose Club, Park Place, St. James’s, London. June 9, 1896.”

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That Herbert Sturmer was a Conservative in politics is made obvious by all his publications; he instinctively sided with minorities, cared for tradition and was certainly not free of that feeling called pride in singularity. Here in *Some Poitevin Protestants in London* he gave free rein to his most heartfelt convictions, some of which, to judge from his response in his letter of 4 October 1896, did not leave Gissing indifferent. Thus in the introductory part of the Appendix he is even more trenchant on the seamy side of democratic culture than Gissing had recently been in *In the Year of Jubilee* or was to be in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*: “One of the evils of a ‘Democratic’ (it would be better to say a Shoddy) age is that people are apt to think they can ‘pick up’ an intellectual pursuit without going through the preliminary ‘mill’ of training; they might as well think of beginning the artificial feeding of a baby with a course of porter and pork-chops” (p. 76). In an aside on one of his relatives, Louis Ogier, who migrated to South Carolina in the eighteenth century, he takes sides rhapsodically: “Need I say that the Confederacy should be held sacred by every European of birth or breeding, since it was the cause of an honourable and spirited aristocracy attacked by Yankee fanaticism (and sham-fanaticism) and by ‘cute’ Yankee speculation. The ‘American civil war,’ which it would be more correct to call the *Yankee invasion* of the Confederate States, was a war waged against the gentry of the Southern States, chiefly by brave mercenaries, on behalf of cowardly Northern politicians, merchants and preachers who had become nearly maddened at the discovery of their social and administrative inferiority to the Southerners, and so were determined to crush the South, and make ‘piles’ of money, by the same great coup” (p. 29). Whereupon he rejects the notion that “the Southerners ill-treated the negro,” which he calls “the silliest of all silly libels upon the South.”

Gissing did not comment on this aspect of the book; he was content to express his interest in the evocation of the lives of the early Huguenot ancestors of his correspondent, hoping he would some day consider writing a study of the Huguenots. Herbert Sturmer formed no such project. He was at the time busy with other plans. What his entry “Nov. Sending to P.M.G. and W.G.” means still has to be determined after consulting the files of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Westminster Gazette* – they will probably yield some more fictional and historical pieces. Much clearer though veiled by the use of his favourite abbreviations is the frequent recurrence of the initials F.E.R. from December 1896 onwards. F.E.R. was Francis Edward Robinson, Henrietta’s brother, two years her junior, a former student at Cambridge and now, since 19 April 1894, the

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husband of Amy Eliza Hargreaves. It is no bold speculation to suggest that they discussed literature and history in the last few months of the year, certainly some seventeenth-century books which – an entry dated 14 December bears this out – he thought Arthur Henry Bullen, Gissing’s publisher, might be willing to reprint. Bullen did not reprint any title edited by Sturmer, but F.E.R. did. The cryptic entry of 29 December 1896 – “F.E.R. idea” – probably concerns the project of founding a publishing firm. The idea developed fairly quickly. By 26 February 1897 Robinson had an office at 20 Great Russell Street, where his brother-in-law called, and on 19 March a decision was made to publish a new edition of *Humane Prudence* by William de Britaine, a once popular book, originally published in 1680, but largely fallen into oblivion. Sturmer’s task was an exacting one. He actually decided to offer his readers, under the title of *The Counsels of William de Britaine*, a rewriting of the best edition, the eleventh, published in 1717, with a critical apparatus consisting of a preface, dated June 1897, and copious notes. The book is strongly reminiscent of Bacon’s *Essays*. Its thirty-two short chapters deal with subjects – study, religion, loyalty, injuries and revenge, friends and friendship, the man of honour, the man of business, prudence in time of danger, among many others – which distinctly appealed to the born moralist the editor was. His editing is indeed remarkable for its scholarly quality and its constant integrity. All his notes are initialled H. S. A note appended to the chapter on religion may cause modern eyebrows to rise or provoke a fleeting smile: “I am somewhat responsible for the general tone of this section. De Britaine’s text contains in places a seventeenth-century narrowness of outlook.” The book, which appeared in July 1897, was well-received. The twelve extracts from reviews that F. E. Robinson was able to print in his advertisements must have gratified Sturmer, whose intellectual distinction was duly acknowledged. The other title edited by Herbert Sturmer for his brother-in-law was a volume with the same moral leanings, also largely forgotten by the late nineteenth-century reading public, *The Guardian’s Instruction or The Gentleman’s Romance, Written for the Diversion and Service of the Gentry*. Highly methodical and openly didactic, Sturmer again immersed himself in his subject, delighting in the annotation of these carefully numbered rules of conduct preceded by a substantial introduction on the author, Stephen Penton (1639-1706), an Oxford don and Anglican clergyman, “a scholar and a gentleman” in a very strict sense of the somewhat hackneyed phrase, the editor admitted. The harmony between the introduction and the text is

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remarkable. “Be not extravagantly high in expression of your *Commendations* of men you like,” wrote Penton. The reviewers were markedly appreciative. The passing of time once more gave the old counsels a strange flavour in an age of universal education and cheap books: “You must resolve to marry; for to leave the management of your great Family to *Servants* onely, is neither for Credit or Profit, and to undertake all the little things of House-keeping yourself, will be Gossiping: Beside the dull converse of *Servants* onely, will either give Scandal, or tempt you to

ramble, and make you be thought looser than really you are.” Gissing *lived* the servant question in a somewhat different manner. In thanking his correspondent for *The Counsels*, he said he had done his editor’s job very well. “I have not, of course, read straight through the volume, but am dipping here and there, so that in the end I shall assimilate all in it that has interest for me.”¹⁰ Whether he ever read *The Guardian’s Instruction*, which came out in December 1897, is unknown.

With these two volumes Sturmer’s publications in book form came to an end, for the 1906 entry under his name in the British Library catalogue, entitled *Anglican Communicants’ Prayers*, is only a seven-page pamphlet printed for private circulation. Nor do the other hitherto unmentioned entries correspond to books he wrote. On two occasions he sent the Librarian of the British Museum copies of books he had annotated in his neat handwriting – W. D. Parish’s *Dictionary of the Sussex Dialect* (1875) and Walter Besant’s *Eulogy of Richard Jefferies* (1888). The latter is a most curious copy, stamped “British Museum 7 Ap. 93,” with autograph signatures of Mrs. Jefferies and her children pasted on the dedication page, a fragment of a letter from Jefferies to Sturmer pasted on the first page of Besant’s preface, another fragment, signed, this time from a letter he had received from Besant stuck at the end of the preface, and a variety of other embellishments in the margins and the bibliography. Besant had printed on pp. 220-21 of the *Eulogy* a sonnet on Jefferies that Sturmer had communicated to him in 1887, and which had first appeared, a few days after Jefferies’ death, in the *Literary World* of 26 August 1887, according to Sturmer himself, who supplied the information at the bottom of p. 221:

Dim woodlands made him wiser far
Than those who thresh their barren thought
With flail of knowledge dearly bought,
Till all his soul shone like a star
That flames at fringe of heaven’s bar,

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Where breaks the surf of space unseen
Against Hope’s veil that lies between
Love’s future and the woes that are.
His soul saw through the weary years –
Past war-bells’ chimes and poor men’s tears –
That day when Time shall bring to birth
(By many a heart whose hope seems vain,
And many a fight where Love slays Pain)
True Freedom, come to reign on earth.

On another occasion he sent to the Librarian of the British Museum a strange volume in binder’s cloth with “City of Charleston” printed in gilt on the spine. He supplied in his own hand a title page which reads: “Charleston Memorials of a Cavalier and Huguenot City. Selected and arranged (from a series of the Municipal Year Books as issued under Mayor Courtenay’s régime) by Herbert Heaton Sturmer, author of ‘Some Poitevin Protestants in England.’ London 1896.” There followed a long dedication to the memory of his “great-great-grandfather, Louis Ogier of South Carolina, of Clapton, Middlesex and of the City of London, Director of the French Protestant Hospital,” a preface, with an address to the reader on the verso: “Gentle Reader! I respectfully entreat you to use the fine folding ‘facsimile’ maps and plans of this volume with great care.” Recent consultation of this fat tome, lovingly put together, has shown that Herbert Sturmer’s wishes have not been disregarded by the (doubtless few) readers who perused this quaint miscellany in the last hundred years or so.

The rest of his journalism is very imperfectly known. A diary jotting for 28 May 1898 indicates that on that day appeared his first review in the *Speaker*, a review which can hardly be identified since it is one of several, all unsigned. A few entries until Gissing's death point to undoubted literary activity. For instance:

16 May 1898: To Newnes, Mr. F. N. [Sir George Newnes, 1851-1910, publisher and M.P. from 1885 to 1895, was the proprietor of the *Strand Magazine* and *Tit-Bits* and the founder of the *Westminster Gazette*. He published a sixpenny reprint of *New Grub Street* in the year of his death.]

July 1898: Special days at F.E.R[obinson]'s off[ice].

31 May 1899. Dr. Traill [this seems to be Dr. H. D. Traill (1842-1900), the editor of *Literature*.]

7 June 1899. News of Sp[ea]k[e]r sale.

6 April 1900. Buckhurst Hill lecture.

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That he went on contributing occasional articles to newspapers and weeklies during those years is likely. It is clear that his "Summary of old diaries" is highly selective. Strangely enough, Gissing, even reduced to G. or G. G., is never mentioned, nor is the article, reprinted below, that he wrote about him and his works in January 1904 for the *Week's Survey*, a short-lived journal (1902-1905) which published reviews of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, *Veranilda* and *Will Warburton*.

II

The relationship between Gissing and Sturmer is documented by three kinds of documents – essentially Gissing's letters, his diary and Sturmer's obituary article in the *Week's Survey* for 9 January 1904. Only the letters are still largely unknown owing to their having been widely scattered. They were sold in three batches over a period of some thirty years. Sturmer himself sold the first in early 1916. He did not record the proceeds of the sale, but anybody even vaguely acquainted with the trade of autograph literary material can form an opinion from Catalogue 151 of W. Heffer & Sons, the Cambridge booksellers (which the current manager of the famous firm dates June 1916).¹¹ The seven items (three letters and four postcards) that were sold on that occasion could be purchased for a total sum of £13.9s. Only two of these items will be published in *extenso* in the *Collected Letters* together with the extracts from another three quoted in the Heffer catalogue, notably of the very first letter Gissing wrote to Sturmer on 8 March 1896. Of the postcard of 22 September 1898 not a word is known, while of that dated 7 December 1897, "closely written and referring to his illness [at Cotrone] and the various places he will visit in Italy," only the present summary is known. The second group of letters was sold by Sturmer's fourth child and youngest son, Kenelm Ralph Bernardin Creuzé Sturmer (1903-1960),¹² at Sotheby's on 20 December 1929. Again seven items were offered for sale – at auction this time – and the proceeds amounted to £40. All of them (four letters and three postcards) eventually reached the main Gissing collections, the Beinecke Library and the Berg Collection. The third group of letters, according to the Sturmer family, was sold in the 1940s. Whether it consisted only of the six items which have found their way to the Beinecke Library, the Berg Collection, Colgate University, the Lilly Library and the University of Texas at Austin, is impossible to say. With a total of at least twenty letters and postcards received, of which

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fifteen will be printed in full in the *Collected Letters* and three in part, Herbert Sturmer has an editorial status that places him in a category of which there are few examples among Gissing's correspondents, Arthur Bowes and F. G. Kitton being the only two who also heard about twenty times from him.

Their correspondence was mainly literary and about each other's works. It became friendly, but not confidential. When it was mutually agreed that a meeting in London would give them both some pleasure – Gissing was doubtless sincere in praising Sturmer's first two volumes, which were obviously the work of a highly cultured man – greater candour about material difficulties began to manifest itself in the novelist's side of the correspondence. One would of course like to have been a witness to their conversation in a London restaurant on 30 August 1898. "Found him a genial fellow, well disposed," Gissing wrote in his diary. That Sturmer also enjoyed the meeting appears in his *Week's Survey* article. Evidence of this also lies in the fact that when Gissing left for Italy on 22 September, Sturmer came to Charing Cross to see him off. Their correspondence became more frequent while Gissing remained abroad. Sturmer promptly told him about Frederick Dolman's article on his works in the *National Review*; he also put him in touch with his college friend Robert Hepburne Swinton-Hunter, a Scotsman who had been his contemporary at Cambridge and who was to die in Rome only a few weeks after Gissing. When he heard through Mrs. Lambart that an article on him that he deemed offensive had been published by the Rochester journalist John Northern Hilliard in the *American Book Buyer*, it was to Sturmer that Gissing wrote so as to obtain details, and his letter shows that he was very anxious to keep his new friend's good opinion of him. An earlier communication on Gissing's quest for the Galezzo at Taranto implies mutual awareness of their classical culture. On at least seven occasions in late 1897 and early 1898 they exchanged letters, the keynote of which was doubtless cordiality on both sides. After going through the papers of both men one sees pretty clearly what they had in common – a formal education that had remained incomplete, a passion for culture that made them impatient with some current educational developments, a proneness to seek mental refuge in the past, and a measure of candour distinctly above the average when they felt called upon to defend their views – those of a minority at odds with a majority. "I like those hints of your own personality which appear through the book," Gissing wrote on 4 October 1896 after reading *Some Poitevin Protestants in London*. When he returned from Italy

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one of the first people he saw before travelling to Ilkley, where his mother, sisters and elder son were just ending a fortnight's holiday, was Herbert Sturmer, who had invited him at his club, the Primrose Club.

With this brief mention on 24 April 1898 Sturmer disappeared from Gissing's diary. Silence prevailed for some months – months of intense work on the novelist's side, of great emotional exaltation as well, amply attested by the correspondence with Gabrielle Fleury. Then in late September there was a quick exchange of letters and Gissing, who had protected himself from any visit of his wife during the most part of the summer by pretending he was in Wakefield, wrote to Sturmer on 20 September as from his mother's home at 9 Wentworth Terrace. Actually he was writing from Dorking but, as his mother and Walter returned to Yorkshire that very day, they were probably asked to take the letter that it might have the Wakefield postmark on the envelope. In that letter Gissing acknowledged receipt of a postcard which had "at last" reached him. There was no longer any point in his using the Wakefield address since Edith had tracked him down successfully on 7 September; yet as he felt he must now concentrate on his novel, *The Crown of Life*, and live a hermit's life for a time and dodge even his best friends, he used it once more. Sturmer must have taken the hint that they must not see each other again for a few months; he did not even know that his friend had made a home for himself near London again – only that he might settle down in Surrey before long. He had his own material difficulties, being

on the point of moving house once more. His diary since he had moved to Streatham Hill was studded with occasional complaints about domestic discomfort – “chimney & stove troubles”; “study 43°-45° with stove”; “stone-cold house” – and he had given “3 months notice of house” on 30 June. So before he moved to Ruskin House, Brixton on 1 October, he must have contented himself with immediately sending his new address to Gissing on 21 September and Gissing must have acknowledged it the next day on a postcard – one of the items sold by Heffer & Sons in 1916 that is now missing – and things remained at that, only provisionally, each correspondent thought, with Gissing’s expressed hope that they might be able to meet in the winter.

Actually this quick exchange of notes proved to all appearances to be the last. The two men simply drifted apart. The story of Gissing’s life from the autumn of 1898 to his death is well-known; it went through many ups and downs and was spent mainly in France. Sturmer also had more than his share of worries and difficulties, mentioned or implied in his “Summary of

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old diaries.” It contains many references to health troubles (“enteritis”; “dreadfully ill”; “enteritic all winter”; “abscess & enteritic”; “heart trouble,” and so on and so forth) and unpleasant material incidents ranging from a “mail-cart stolen” to “chimney bothers.” The new Brixton home – the fifth removal since his return with wife and child from the West Indies in 1893 – was a new disappointment. And the “Summary” hints at difficulties of another nature, well-known to Gissing, that is domestic disagreements. The entries for 6 and 7 October 1899 suggest the temporary separation of husband and wife. Clearly Henrietta went to live at West Norwood while Herbert settled in chambers at 10 Gray’s Inn Place, a small street off High Holborn, within walking distance of the Record Office, where he had collected much material for his book on *Some Poitevin Protestants in London*. Sturmer kept these chambers for a year, but there is evidence in the “Summary” that he saw his wife and children occasionally and corresponded with her. On 27 September 1900 he moved to Norwood and “gave up G[ray’s] I[nn] keys” two days later. A cursory glance at the events recorded for 1901 reveals that a fair proportion of them are concerned with his own health. Nine entries from 6 January to 18 April referred to enteritis, abscesses, tonsils, headaches and a sore throat. Worse of all, the entries for 5 July (“Altercation with H.”) and 17 July (“Strain of past few weeks, also rudeness & opposition”) testify to intense domestic misery that seems to echo Gissing’s own from 1892 to 1897. The autumn of 1901 saw an attempt which was eventually successful for the whole family to settle in Dorset. Sturmer’s last removal in Gissing’s time took place on 21 October. No. 6 West Street, Poole, was his address until his marriage broke down, an event which seems to have been connected with the birth of the fourth child of the couple, Kenelm, on 16 April 1903.

By then, Herbert Sturmer’s recollections of Gissing as a man had possibly begun to fade, but certainly not his interest in the works. The “appreciation” he contributed to the *Week’s Survey* in the week that followed his former friend’s death shows that he did not cease reading his works after their correspondence came to an end. Of the nine titles he mentions, ranging from *Demos* to *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, four achieved publication after their last meeting, *The Town Traveller*, *The Crown of Life*, *By the Ionian Sea* and *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. This appreciation also testifies that Sturmer was capable of enjoying the great variety of the works. *Isabel Clarendon*, *The Odd Women*, *The Town Traveller* and *By the Ionian Sea* are rarely welcomed with almost equal eagerness by critics. Sturmer, as is not uncommon in obituary articles written by a deceased writer’s friends, might have made much of his personal

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acquaintance with Gissing and still more of the twenty letters from him he had carefully

preserved. Instead he cultivated a commendable discretion, quoting from one letter only (that of 27 February 1898), referring to himself not too transparently as “an acquaintance” of the novelist. His appreciation – one of the best that appeared in the weeklies – would doubtless have earned Gissing’s own approval. The quotation from Epictetus was particularly adequate in more respects than one: Sturmer had read his *Ryecroft* carefully. His opening sentence harmonizes with Ryecroft’s last sentence and even better with the touching thoughts of death in Autumn XII: “I always turn out of my way to walk through a country churchyard; these rural resting-places are as attractive to me as a town cemetery is repugnant. I read the names upon the stones, and find a deep solace in thinking that for all these the fret and the fear of life are over. There comes to me no touch of sadness; whether it be a little child or an aged man, I have the same sense of happy accomplishment; the end having come, and with it the eternal peace, what matter if it came late or soon? There is no such gratulation as *Hic jacet*. There is no such dignity as that of death. In the path trodden by the noblest of mankind these have followed; that which of all who live is the utmost thing demanded, these have achieved. I cannot sorrow for them, but the thought of their vanished life moves me to a brotherly tenderness. The dead, amid this leafy silence, seem to whisper encouragement to him whose fate yet lingers: As we are, so shalt thou be; and behold our quiet!”

George Gissing

“He has escaped.” So might Epictetus have greeted the news that such an one as George Gissing had done with earth’s sorrows and mischances. And if Gissing had been the moody or even misanthropic person that a popular delusion figured him, such might be the first remark of those who saw enough of him to know how hard life had hit him where he was least protected against its bludgeoning. But the fact is that the man was at heart an idealist, and, in proportion to the lot that fell to him, one of the cheeriest and most enthusiastic of human beings. What casual acquaintances mistook for cynicism was merely a Yorkshire training in reserve, and the desire not to entangle himself in conversational difficulties. George Gissing had the terribly keen insight into character that perceives the corrosive effects of sentimentalism, and of philanthropy that seeks influence and position by pseudo-altruistic action. No insincere “slummer” could talk to him without being made to feel uncomfortable. And so the brave, heroically sociable toiler and thinker had again and again the annoyance of knowing that his personality was as much

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misrepresented as his books. “I should be still more enraged if you, or any other sensible person, thought me capable of such whining twaddle,” he wrote to an acquaintance in regard to one case of his being made to appear as a “disappointed,” complaining seeker after fame. But the usual form taken by the petty hostility of those who found the writer or his novels show them what manner of persons they were and should not be, was the assertion that Gissing’s books are unimportant, partly because they contain a false philosophy of life, and represent modern society, below the level of the moneyed middle-classes, as much fuller of evils and griefs than it is.

It behoves a lover of literature, and especially a lover of English literature, to take up this challenge boldly. For if Gissing’s philosophy of life, and observation of it, were almost worthless, his novels would still have to be considered as great literature. There is something massive, majestic, in the marshalled power of his best chapters. A stylist may make small corrections here and there, yet how many stylists, if they tried for a week, could write one page to equal those most thoughtful, most virile passages which abound in Gissing’s best novels? But so far from his philosophy of life, much less his observation of human events, being incorrect, we assert that both were true to experience, his own experience and that of others. Who that has

really put off the armour of cosy house and well-trained servants and recognised social currency to face the trials and the hindrances of unhelped poverty thinks any dark picture that Gissing has drawn too gloomy to be accurate? What Gissing saw so clearly was the truth that the books of the Old Testament repeatedly affirm, that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, and that, so far as this world is concerned, folly, however innocent or even well-intentioned, is sin. Because a gold watch belongs to a saint, you will not fail to break it by dropping it upon the paving-stones: because a drunken carman did not mean to hurt his child, an addition to the ranks of cripples has not been prevented: because a vicar conceals the misery of his married life, his daughter is not necessarily ashamed to add to it. In Gissing's novels the sorrow and the suffering enter just as they do in real life, and the persons who do not wish to think of their own neighbours' griefs do not like to read of just such woes in "The Nether World" or "New Grub Street." From all Gissing's tales the same moral may be drawn that his friends drew from his own life, that while the idealist, literate or illiterate, must suffer more or less acutely, it is he who needs most and could best utilise the old homely warnings of proverbs and shrewd persons. If any young man seeks counsel at the shrine of Gissing's genius, let him take it in the form of a warning to secure health, wisdom, and independence by every legitimate method, before unforeseen "days of darkness" arrive.

But it cannot be too positively stated that much of Gissing's best work may be found in his descriptions of the variety and interest of London incidents and other vivid and wholesome "things seen." Such a book as "Isabel Clarendon," comparatively immature as it may be thought, reads almost as well to-day as it did about seventeen years ago. "The Odd Women" and "The Emancipated" are (as advertisers used to say) "replete with" entertaining matter. "The Crown of Life," apart from the fact that every unmarried man should study it, contains passage after

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passage of delightful writing. "The Town Traveller" is almost rollicking in its fun. Had George Gissing lived a dozen years longer, neither ill-health nor wearing anxieties would have been likely to deprive the public of several volumes as enthusiastic as "By the Ionian Sea," and as tenderly beautiful as "The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft." There ran through George Gissing's character a vein of intense sympathy with the sorrowful and the wronged; probably his desire to avoid the crowd and to experience the joys of travel and historical associations was chiefly caused by the wish to keep himself from wasting thought and work-time on evils he had no power to deal with as though he had been a politician or employer of labour. "Thou shalt renounce" was the stern sentence of Life. One thing fate left possible to him. He could force himself to produce books for thinking men to treasure. To this task George Gissing devoted the whole energy of his brave, manly, upright career. And England must cherish the memory of this essentially-English hero of literature. For "The Nether World" and "Demos" contain imperishable English prose.¹³

III

Little enough need and can be said of Herbert Sturmer's later years. Not that his life from 1904 to 1923 is altogether undocumented. His "Summary of old diaries," which stops with the entry for 7 December 1916, covers about twenty-five pages of closely written entries, but it gives only a vague idea of his activities and movements. It bristles with names of persons and places, with references to his bad health, facts concerning his friends and acquaintances, allusions to public events, rarely to money matters.

The main occurrences in 1904 were the separation from his wife and his departure for the West Indies. A letter of that year to her has been preserved – it reads like an earnest, dignified plea for reconciliation, but it brought no positive results. He left Poole for Bristol on 19 May,

sailed from Avonmouth two days later, was off Grand Turk Island on 2 June and landed in Jamaica the next day. On June 10 he noted: "Spanish Town, wet. Lost coat," and no entry for the next six months or so seems to indicate that he left Jamaica. One of the longest entries, that for 28 July, will give an idea of the often cryptic contents: "Dry Harbour. Nash./ St. Ann's Bay./ Ocho Rios. bought thimble./ Port Maria./Annotta Bay. Chinaman pipe./Port Antonio. Hotel, rush." That he travelled much, by boat and by train, during the first few weeks in Jamaica, is pretty sure. Social contacts with a number of persons were frequent during that half year he spent first in Spanish Town, then in the capital, Kingston. On 30 September he noted the arrival of Sir Alex Swetham, actually Swettenham (1846-1933), the new Captain-General and

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Governor-in-Chief, who came from British Guiana, where he had been in office for three years. Two months later he landed in Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas, after a fortnight's sailing, and it was there, according to his will, that he became Private Librarian at Government House. The "Summary" confirms this. The next three entries read:

Dec. 2. Called Gov.
Dec. 5. To Thurstons.
Jan. 10. Hot. Gov. House work.

Two subsequent entries (23 Feb.: "Index idea"; 22 April: "index attempted") are obviously connected with his work. Yet one wonders whether this work as librarian was not practically a sinecure. At all events, not much work can have been done in a few months, for indeed as early as May 1905 he left the Bahamas for good on S.S. Niagara, and for the next four or five months we find him travelling in North America. In later years, he underlined in his "Summary" the main places he called at: New York on 27 May, Magog sta. Luscar on 3 June, St. John's on 10 July. The topographic entries follow one another:

Sept. 26. Plymouth. Lowell. Salem.
Sept. 29. Saw Boston first.
Oct. 7. On board Canopic.
Oct. 18. Gibraltar.

There he stayed until the end of May 1906, often in bad health, referring more than once to abscesses and other health troubles. The names of the persons who are mentioned are usually reduced to initials. One "Sir W" blossoms into "Sir William" after months, but his identity is not any clearer for that. And thus the record goes on to the end of 1916, making one wonder what were the diarist's relationships with the many people referred to, whether he happens to be in Dover, Canterbury or Oxford. There appear occasional mentions of his children's birthdays – Lionel's tenth in 1906, Lancelot's twenty-first in 1914. On this last occasion, a vain attempt to communicate with his wife is laconically jotted down: "Teleg. to H. returned." One has an impression that she would have nothing more to do with him. The name that anyone who has read his will expects to find sooner or later at long last comes up on 9 August 1915 – P.V.M.B., that is Paul Victor Mendelssohn Benecke, M.A., Fellow of Magdalen College, some eight years his junior, son of Charles Victor Benecke and Marie Mendelssohn Bartholdy, who was the eldest

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daughter of the famous composer.¹⁴ Friendship quickly developed between the two men, and Benecke's initials henceforth crop up regularly in the last few pages of the "Summary."

Startlingly one comes across the name of a man who had known Gissing and once corresponded with him – Sir Walter Raleigh – to whom Benecke introduced Sturmer. Did they realize, one wonders, when they talked together in Benecke's presence in the Magdalen smoking-room that Gissing was a link between them and they had been corresponding with him at the same time – in November 1897? One would like to imagine they did.

On 7 December 1916 we lose track of Herbert Sturmer altogether. He wrote "1917" on the next page of his "Summary," but stopped at that. On the opposite page, a press-cutting the provenance of which is unknown reads:

A MAGDALEN COLLEGE TRAGEDY.
Mysterious Accident to Visitor to Oxford Don's Rooms.

An elderly man fell from a window of Magdalen College, Oxford, yesterday into the quadrangle, and was killed.

He was identified, telegraphs the "Daily Chronicle" correspondent, as Mr. Herbert Heaton Sturmer. His age is given as 63.

He has been at Oxford off and on since 1915, prior to which he was secretary to the Governor of Bahamas. His present visit began in May of last year, when he stayed at the Gresham Hotel, Beaumont-street. He was accustomed to visiting a don, Mr. P. V. M. Benecke, of Magdalen, and had free use of his room.

It was from the window of this room that Mr. Sturmer fell, a distance of 35 ft. Mr. Sturmer is believed to have sons and daughters living in Chelsea.

The accident had happened on 12 February 1923. The Somerset House entry about his will, which was made on 20 June 1922, confirms the date and place of Herbert Sturmer's death. The *Oxford Times* gave some more details in its next two numbers:

"Fatal Fall at Magdalen College." This afternoon the City Coroner will hold an inquest on Mr. Herbert Heaton Sturmer, an elderly man who fell from a window of Magdalen College on Monday and broke his neck. Mr. Sturmer, who was an author, was visiting Mr. P. V. M. Benecke, a Fellow of Magdalen, and it was from his window that he fell a distance of about thirty-five feet to the quadrangle. When Dr. Mallam was called he could only pronounce life extinct. At the time of his death it was believed that deceased had relatives in London, and it was through publicity in the Press that the police was able to get in touch with them. From 1915 Mr. Sturmer, who was of a very quiet and reserved

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disposition, had been a frequent visitor to Oxford. His last visit commenced in May last, when he took up residence at the Gresham Hotel, in Beaumont-street. He was 63 years of age, and prior to 1915 is said to have been secretary to the Governor of the Bahamas. [Friday, 16 February 1923, p. 16]

"The Fall from a College Window." Mr. H. F. Galpin, jun. held an inquest in the Settling Room, on Friday, on the body of Herbert Heaton Sturmer (63), an author, lately residing at the Gresham Private Hotel, who committed suicide on Monday by throwing himself from the window of Mr. Paul Benecke's room at Magdalen College.

Henrietta Sturmer, 40, Glebe-place, Chelsea, identified the body as that of her husband. She said she had not seen or heard from the deceased for the past twenty years.¹⁵ Seeing a report of the matter in the daily Press, she communicated with the Coroner.

Frederick Pinching, college servant, 12, Alma-place, Cowley-road, said at 1.45 p.m.

on Monday he went into Mr. Benecke's room for the purpose of attending to the fire. He saw the deceased, who was sitting in a chair and who told him the fire was all right, as he had just made it up. On crossing the quadrangle, witness noticed that the deceased was still seated. Mr. Sturmer frequently used Mr. Benecke's room.

Paul Victor Mendelssohn Benecke, Fellow and Tutor of Magdalen College, said at 11.15 a.m. on Monday he met the deceased on Carfax and made an appointment for him at 5 p.m. Witness returned to college at 2 p.m. and found the deceased in the act of getting out of the window. He had one foot on the ledge outside, and witness remarked, "What are you doing, Mr. Sturmer? Be careful," and he replied "It's all right. It's about the kettle," or words to that effect. Witness thought he was looking for something which he had dropped on the ledge and grabbed him, but the deceased struggled and, witness losing hold of him, he fell on the gravel path below. Witness ran downstairs and, going to the lodge for assistance, summoned Dr. Mallam. Witness had known the deceased for 7 ½ years and had permitted him to use his rooms. The deceased had been worried over his health and had remarked, in a half-humorous way, that it might be best for all concerned if he met with some accident. He did not take the statement seriously.

In reply to a juryman, the witness said he was of opinion the deceased intentionally threw himself out of the window.

P. C. Wyldes said he was called to Magdalen College and took the body to the mortuary. There was a drop of 35 feet from the window to the ground.

Dr. Ernest Mallam said the deceased died from injuries due to the fall.

A verdict of "Suicide whilst of unsound mind" was returned. [Friday, 23 February 1923, p. 7)¹⁶

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A very sad end to a sad life, some nineteen years after Gissing's death at Ispoure, near Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port. In different senses of the term, both men died in exile, at odds with the present and tired of life, stormy petrels of the cultural world in the so-called "transition period" between the Victorian age and modernist times. Characteristically, after years of journalising, they both ceased to record their daily doings without offering a word of explanation about their decision to put down their pens. The ego, once a prime mover, came to lose most of its vigour. There is in Herbert Sturmer's remark to his friend Benecke that "it might be best for all concerned if he met with some accident," an opting out of life of which it would be easy enough to find equivalents in Gissing's last writings, from *By the Ionian Sea* to *Veranilda*. The old English essayists were for each of them a favourite refuge – William de Britaine and Stephen Penton had, or at least the passing of time prompts us to believe they had, affinities with Sir Thomas Browne and Jeremy Taylor, those favourites of Gissing in the literary pantheon, but further back, in ancient Greece, there were names that beckoned to the two friends, Epictetus and Herodotus for instance – names that, as Gissing put it in his memorable last paragraph of *By the Ionian Sea*, enabled them to dream themselves back into a ghostly silent world, "to-day and all its sounds forgotten."

¹As so often happens, only Gissing's side of the correspondence has been preserved.

²Most of the information on the Sturmer family given in the present article has been collected in the last two or three years, but the final and by far most fruitful and rewarding stage began in September 1993 when a decision was made to attempt to trace Sturmer's descendants, if any. Warm thanks are due first of all to those persons, three in number, who replied to a circular letter last autumn – Mrs. Agnes Sturmer of London, Miss Margaret Sturmer of San Clemente, California, and Mrs. Sturmer of Barjac, France –, then to Peter John Sturmer Leonard, who most generously shared his knowledge of the Sturmer genealogy; lastly to Mr. R. C.

Sturmer, whose assistance concerning the reconstruction of his grandfather's life has been vital. All the more personal documents quoted from or alluded to in this article are in his possession, notably the portrait reproduced here, which is different from that which will be accessible in Volume VI of *The Collected Letters of George Gissing* next autumn.

³This "Pedigree," as implied in the preceding note, is in the possession of Mr. R. C. Sturmer.

⁴Actually this "Summary," once the writer's birth has been recorded on p. 1 ("Preliminary./ Born Dec 30th") covers the years 1869-1916. It is a factual summary with such a copious use of initials and abbreviations that many entries hardly make sense nowadays. The entries for 1869-1881 cover four pages, the last three consisting of the main events during his

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college years. Thus on 10 June 1879, he noted that he "saw Huxley Browning Sir F. Leighton take hon. degrees." The last two entries for 1880 read: "Dec 8. Operation/ OF AGE Dec 30 Twenty-one-years old."

⁵The marriage certificate concerning this "marriage solemnized in the Cathedral and Parish Church of Saint Michael, in the Island of Barbados in the year 1891" gives Herbert Heaton von Stürmer's "rank, occupation or profession" as "gentleman," residing at Trafalgar Hotel, and his father as "clerk in Holy Orders, M.A. and Rector." Henrietta Robinson is described as "assistant mistress at Queen's College," residing in that establishment, and her father as a schoolmaster.

⁶Of Cynthia, Mr. R. C. Sturmer writes that she was a nurse during World War I, serving in France at some time. In 1931 she married H. J. Wilks of New Jersey, whom she had met in London. One child was born to them, Robinson Wilks, commonly called Robin. Cynthia's husband died in 1933 and she remarried in 1937. She died in 1959.

⁷Lancelot, known to his family as Lance, later a graduate of London University (1913), became a teacher at Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Barnet, Middlesex. He served for a short time in the army during the Great War. Mr. R. C. Sturmer remembers him as a retiring, pensive, extremely erudite man who seemed to be happier away from the mainstream of society.

⁸This letter, printed on p. 182, gives some idea of his style and turn of mind:

Sir, – The party of birth, place, wealth, and power attracts mobs just as a light in a midnight garden allures moths. But the moths get singed in that garden play, whereas the party gets blamed for the snobs. It suffers fools, but not gladly.

Snobs not infrequently buy or inherit estates, and are not unknown in country vicarages. Election times are the occasion for their apotheosis, while their motto is "Let us bray."

Then come running together from the crowd of recent converts certain folk who try to make Conservatism as vulgar as they have nearly succeeded in making Liberalism aforetime... O Politics, what social atrocities are perpetrated in thy name!

But the ideal of the genuine Tory remains unharmed. He admires Mr. Balfour's courtesy to opponents, and joins with you, sir, in trying to lift political eyes to those snow-white heights of principle where vulgar personalities wither in the pure and sunlit air. – I have the honour to be, sir, your obedient servant,

Herbert Sturmer

On at least one previous occasion he had sent a letter to the editor of the same journal. See "Englishmen in the Tropics," 19 January 1895, p. 75. He confesses that he tried in vain to become a permanent resident in tropical islands for the sake of health and expresses his conviction that Robert Louis Stevenson made a mistake when he settled in Samoa. "In a tropical climate an invalid constantly gets overheated, and therefore risks taking a chill. If he flies to thinner garments for a remedy, he merely adds to the risk; and, to crown all, he is naturally

tempted to bathe when overheated. For health, a white man should never stay more than about six months at a time in tropical islands.”

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⁹Little is known of Lionel who, Mr. R. C. Sturmer thinks, was in the army and after a time discharged. He was, like his father, interested in natural history, remained unmarried and childless. At the time of his death, which occurred on 17 December 1946, he lived at 89 Conduit Street, Leicester.

¹⁰Letter of 18 August 1897, written from Castle Bolton, shortly before they met.

¹¹In his copy of his *Memories* (1916), Edward Clodd pasted the page of the Heffer catalogue offering the seven Gissing letters and postcards as well as seven first English editions of the later titles. *The Odd Women* was priced at 21s., *In the Year of Jubilee* at 18s. (Copy in the Alan Clodd collection.)

¹²Kenelm, who was born on 16 April 1903, was a dental technician by occupation, but he is essentially remembered for his work in Esperanto, a language in which he was perfectly fluent, wrote original works and text-books, and into which he made translations. His son, Mr. R. C. Sturmer, says he had a considerable literary interest and was a voracious reader in English, French and, to some extent, German. He had an excellent knowledge of English literature. For years he was a teacher at various institutes and a tutor in Esperanto for Ruskin College, Oxford. Mr. Sturmer remembers accompanying him to the International Congress of Esperantists in Paris in 1950, where he acted as a judge for the literary prizes. Prior to selling the second group of Gissing's letters at Sotheby's in 1929, Kenelm Sturmer generously wrote to Algernon Gissing, offering to let him see the letters. The following reply speaks for itself: "Bloxham, Banbury, Oxon., 17th Sept. 1929./ Dear Sir, Thank you much for your letter. I don't know that I shall do much more with regard to my brother's life & letters, especially as my nephew (George Gissing's son) is getting active in handling his father's life & work. On this account I shall take the liberty of forwarding your kind letter to him in the hope that you will extend the same opportunity to him to see the letters you mention in case he should wish to do so. Yours very truly, Algernon Gissing./ K.R.C. Sturmer Esq."

¹³This article was the first part of a twofold appreciation: "George Gissing. Two Appreciations. I. – By Herbert Sturmer. II. – By Arthur Ransome," *Week's Survey*, 9 January 1904, pp. 173-74.

¹⁴The *Who Was Who* entry on Benecke (1868-1944) offers some details about his life and academic career until 1893, but mentions no publications.

¹⁵After her separation from her husband, Mr. R. C. Sturmer informs us, Henrietta earned her living by teaching art and piano in Chelsea. Her situation cannot have been a comfortable one in all respects. The children of the couple were still very young. Cynthia, the eldest, was not quite twelve, and Kenelm, the youngest, barely twelve months old. She died at Chelsea on 18 February 1931. The death certificate in the possession of the family gives the cause of death as "rupture of anterior wall of heart due to fatty degeneration." The informant was her son Kenelm, who then lived at 166 Brixton Road, S.W.9. Under the heading "Rank or Profession," she is described as "widow of Herbert Heaton Sturmer Journalist." Also in the possession of the family is an undated press-cutting probably from a local newspaper c. 25 February 1931, which reads:

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"Mrs. H. Sturmer –. On Saturday, at Streatham Park Cemetery, the funeral took place of Mrs. Henrietta Sturmer, who died at her residence at 40 Glebe-place, Chelsea, the previous Wednesday at the age of 68. Mrs. Sturmer, who was the daughter of Mr. Edward Robinson, for

many years headmaster of York Bluecoat School, and widow of Mr. Herbert Heaton Sturmer, author of "Some Poitevin Protestants in London," was well known to a large number of people in Chelsea, where she had lived since 1917. She was formerly art mistress at Queen's College, Barbados, and it was at that time that she first met Mr. Sturmer, who was private secretary to the Governor of the Bahamas.

Among those who attended the interment were Mr. F. E. Robinson, M.A., J.P. (brother), Mr. K. R. C. Sturmer (son), Mrs. McKee, Mrs. L. M. Newell, and Mr. H. V. Lewis. There were flowers from Mrs. Willis, of New York, U.S.A. (daughter) [actually, Mrs. Cynthia Wilks], and other members of the family and friends, including Mr. and Mrs. G. Richards, Mr. J. J. Sullivan, and Mrs. Tucker."

¹⁶Herbert Sturmer's will reads in part: "I appoint Paul Victor Mendelssohn Benecke Fellow of Magdalen College Oxford sole Executor of this my will As my kind friend the said Paul Victor Mendelssohn Benecke is well acquainted with the names of my other friends and with my feelings towards them and especially those toward my honoured friend Miss Elspeth Marian Wood Hill and toward Miss Margaret Ellen Mackay whom I have come to look upon as a kind of loyal adopted and adopting sister or daughter I here bequeath to them no specified mementoes of me knowing that this recollection of my wishes and their understanding of his perfect goodwill and fine judgment will be in accord as to what they should receive as mementoes of me to whom they have been precious." The Register of Wills at Somerset House gives the main facts about the date and place of his death, adding that his estate was valued at £71.2s.4d.

Gissing in Sussex

Sydney Lott
Eastbourne Local History Society

The Long Man of Wilmington still gleams like silver in the morning sunlight as it did for Gissing when he walked the South Downs near Eastbourne on a golden day in March, 1894. The diary records a day of exquisite spring with primroses abundant, the ceaseless songs of larks and the bleating of lambs as he made his way to Alfriston in the Cuckmere Valley to lunch at the Star – "a fine old inn." The Star is still a fine old inn with oak beams and log fires but, hopefully, without the churlish people he considered spoilt such places. One of the uncharacteristically happy days provided by the two weeks' holiday in Eastbourne. Walter's

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bronchitis improved and we do not even hear complaints about Edith who had been so troublesome in the weeks in Hastings preceding the change to Eastbourne.

"Miss Lord of Camberwell" (*In the Year of Jubilee*) was near completion in spite of cramped conditions in the two rooms at 25 shillings a week in 6, Grove Road, opposite Eastbourne's elegant station resplendent in the impressive style of the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway. It is still a handsome building which escaped second world war bombs although, sadly, 6, Grove Road was badly damaged. The holiday was certainly a rare success. Gissing enjoyed his walks to Beachy Head, Pevensey and the downland villages, including Willingdon which, half a century later, Gissing enthusiast George Orwell used as a named setting for his 20th-century classic, *Animal Farm*. If Gissing and Orwell could walk through the village to-day – fascinating thought – they would see little change. Even the sheep are back on the Downs after years of arable farming. The success of the holiday no doubt owed much to the

weather, bearing in mind Gissing's extreme sensitivity to climatic conditions. Comment on a short holiday at the same address the following year was more typically Gissing – "A very poor week, lodgings bad, weather worse."

Six years earlier, in 1888, saw Gissing in two rooms at 27, Brightland Road in Eastbourne at 10 shillings per week with Miss Brown, a poor, old, simple woman. The small house at the end of a Victorian terrace, near the 12th-century Parish church, still stands. The weather at the end of February was terrible with snow and an incessant east wind. Gissing's spirits were already very low when, on returning from a visit to the county town of Lewes, he received a telegram – "Mrs. Gissing is dead. Come at once." He caught the 7.45 train and was at 7K at a quarter to 11. Then followed the dramatic visit with Roberts to view the body in its pitiful surroundings. Gissing was devastated but appears to have recovered sufficiently by April to make a lightning visit to Eastbourne again.

No doubt it was during the February visit that he made the acquaintance of the mysterious Miss Curtis who lived with her aunt, Mrs. Thornborough, at 13, Church Street – now joined with its neighbour to become an Indian Restaurant. 13, Church Street is a stone's throw from 27, Brightland Road. Gissing obviously had high hopes of Miss Curtis. It was on the 23 April 1888 that he took the sudden idea to go to Eastbourne – solely to look at 13, Church Street. He records arrival at 3.30 and departure at 5.30 with two hours' talk with Miss Curtis. The next day he sent a copy of *Thyrza* to the aunt, Mrs. Thornborough, and received a two-line

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acknowledgement from Miss Curtis which put him in a good humour. He spent the next two weeks thinking about and longing for her. On 9 May he could no longer stand the strain. He rushed off to Eastbourne in a fever-pitch of excitement but a shock reception awaited him at 13, Church Street. He sadly records – "All gone off in smoke. Never mind; the better perhaps." We do not hear of Miss Curtis again. With the bulk of his work still to be accomplished, who knows what would have happened if Miss Curtis had become the second Mrs. Gissing instead of Edith?

The Sussex location which evokes the presence of Gissing best lies along the coast to the east in the ancient cinque port of Rye. In 1901 Wells and his wife invited Gissing to stay at their home in Sandgate, near Folkestone, so that he could meet fellow writers Conrad and Henry James. They made an overnight visit to James at Lamb House (now National Trust) in Rye. Gissing admired the lovely Georgian house in Church Square as countless visitors still do. He was amused at dinner by reminiscences of Turgenev in Paris and, when leaving, he presented James with a copy of *New Grub Street*. A Smith, Elder edition can still be seen through the glass front of a locked bookcase and a picture of Gissing hangs in the hall together with those of Chesterton, Conrad, Wells, Beerbohm, Belloc, Ford Madox Ford, Kipling, Gosse and Mrs. Humphry Ward, all of whom had been guests of the hospitable James.

Finally, it was in Sussex on Monday, 1 May 1899 that Gissing came to the county town of Lewes and stayed at the White Hart to wait for Gabrielle in Rouen to send for him. Two postcards arranged for departure on Wednesday, 3 May. Then a telegram postponed the date to Saturday, 6 May. On the last evening as he sat at dinner who should walk in but William Rothenstein with a friend, who proved to be Walter Sickert – he had come over for a day from his home in Dieppe. Many such meetings must have taken place in the White Hart, which still stands solidly in the attractive and well preserved Lewes High Street opposite the County Court. Its chief bid to fame is with Thomas Paine (1737-18809), author of *The Rights of Man* and supporter of American Independence, who presided over the political discussions of the Headstrong Club here before he was accused of treason and fled to France. From the White Hart, Gissing also set out for Newhaven to cross the Channel, no longer to have a home in Britain.

Thus the County of the South witnessed some significant events in the short life of the

turbulent man from the North.

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The Mediterranean Passion

Jacob Korg

The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South, by John Pemble (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) is a study of the reactions of British travellers to Italy, Greece, Spain, Algeria, Palestine, and other countries bordering on the Mediterranean. Pemble cites the opinions and observations of numerous writers who made journeys of this kind in the nineteenth century, and Gissing is one of his most frequent sources. He has found valuable observations in a number of Gissing's works, beginning, of course, with *By the Ionian Sea*, and including the letters to Bertz, the Diary and *The Emancipated*. One finds that Gissing's opinions corresponded, in general, with those of other travellers, and that he fits comfortably into Pemble's generalizations about them.

Pemble notes that many other writers, like Gissing, found the common people and crowd behavior of the southern countries far superior to what they had seen of the British working class, but remained ambivalent – “in the novels of George Eliot and George Gissing compassion fights a losing battle with revulsion.” Gissing's observations about the absence of drunkenness, the good level of café conversation, and the air of democracy in Italy are cited. British travellers often contrasted the weather of their own country with the liberating atmosphere of the south. Pemble turns to Gissing's Diary for his consistent complaints about the London weather and notes that “his early novels are heavy with the symbolism of urban darkness.” The golden sunlight of Italy was to him, as to English travellers in general, a deliverance into freedom and a renewed youthfulness. Many experienced an almost mystical communion in the serene, myth-laden scenes they encountered. Pemble quotes, as an example, Gissing's (or rather, Ryecroft's) recollection of his Italian visit: “There, there did the gods reveal to me the secret of their eternal calm.”

The “passion” for the south Pemble analyzes was not unmixed. Gissing was not alone in deploring the effects of tourism and modernization on the people, as well as the monuments, of Italy. With Gissing, as with others, “love of art was apt to express itself as hatred of man.” And Pemble points out that he was among those who foresaw disastrous consequences in the growing nationalism and militarism of early 20th-century Italy.

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This is an excellent study, which brings together the testimony of numerous Victorians, to give a detailed and vivid account of the subject. The widely-ranging material is brought under control by good organization, and formed into intelligible sub-topics. However, the Gissing enthusiast will notice that nothing whatever is said of Gissing's visit to Greece, though it is one of the countries within Pemble's range. And it can be argued that Pemble has not made enough of Gissing's classical interests or of his penetration to sites connected with the more obscure recesses of Roman history.

Notes and News

With regret we announce the death of Russell Kirk on 29 April at his home in Mecosta, Michigan. He was seventy-five. His name had been familiar to Gissing readers and scholars since 1950, the year in which he published an oft-quoted article, "Who Knows George Gissing?" – shortly after a visit to Wakefield at a time when Gissing's star had sunk very low. When a volume of collected articles on a writer who had recently been called a permanent stranger and a born outsider was commissioned by Frank Cass & Co, the editor could not think of a better introductory essay than Russell Kirk's. Gissing's reputation has been altered out of recognition since the middle of the present century, but this essay remains and will remain a landmark in studies on the novelist. In various books that Dr. Kirk published over the years significant allusions to Gissing will be found. *The Conservative Mind* (1953) contains a substantial section, which testifies to his good knowledge of the main works from *Workers in the Dawn* and *The Unclassed* through *The Nether World* and *Born in Exile* to *Our Friend the Charlatan* and *Henry Ryecroft*. What appealed to Russell Kirk in Gissing was his unsparing criticism of social evils in late Victorian England as well as his cultural commitment. When discussing certain social themes, Gissing's name came readily to his pen. He did not overlook Henry Ryecroft's most conservative pronouncements in his *Portable Conservative Reader* (Penguin, 1982). In 1990, in collaboration with his wife Annette and their friends, he organised a symposium the most part of which was devoted to Gissing. Since that event, which practically coincided with the publication of the first volume of Gissing's *Collected Letters*, he had been reviewing all volumes in different journals. His assessment of Volume IV in the *Chesterton*

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Review was to be his last – and his best. He obviously thought that Gissing's cause was a good one and he did his best to foster interest in him. His generosity to the editor of this journal will be remembered. (For a substantial account of his career, see the obituary by William H. Honan, "Russell Kirk is Dead at 75; Seminal Conservative Author," *New York Times*, 30 April 1994, with a photograph taken in 1969.)

The week from Monday, 27 June to Friday, 1 July was something of a Gissing Week on BBC Radio 4. Three of his short stories were read in "Book at Bedtime," a programme produced by Matthew Walters and broadcast from 10.45 to 11 p.m. Anna Massey read "Miss Rodney's Leisure" on Monday and Tuesday, Gareth Armstrong "Our Learned Fellow-townsmen" on Wednesday, and John Baddeley "A Poor Gentleman" on Thursday and Friday. Only the first and third stories are to be found in the *Everyman* selection published last year. Thanks are due to the various friends who sent us press-cuttings and cassettes.

Little by little more information becomes available about Gissing's reputation in foreign countries where his books have been and/or are still being translated. Thus Wulfhard Stahl, of Bern, who is well-known to some scholars and collectors as a keen collector of rarities, has sent these interesting Notes from Russia:

"Thanks to two helpful librarians at the Library of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, I was able to detect three Gissing items during my visit to that beautiful city also known as Russia's gate to the West.

Two of them are condensed versions of dissertations on Gissing: the first by Alla Grigorevna Nenarochkina, entitled "George Gissing, Romanist" (George Gissing, Novelist), pp. 27, Moscow, 1975; the second by Yelena Grigorevna Slatina, entitled "George Gissing i yevo romany o rabochem klasse" (George Gissing and his working-class novels), pp. ii + 24, Moscow, 1984 (written at the Philological Department of the State University of Taschkent).

The third item of interest was a copy of the Russian translation of *Thyrza* – spelt *Tirssa* – which was first serialized in *Vsyemirnaya Biblioteka*, in eight parts, from December 1891 to July 1892. The book was printed by I. N. Skorokhodova in St. Petersburg in 1893. In the journal the instalments ran thus: 1. ch. I-IV, p. 1-43; 2. ch. V-VII, p. 45-86; 3. ch. VIII-X, p. 87-113; 4. ch. XI-XVIII, p. 115-172; 5. ch. XIX-XXII, p. 173-211; 6. ch. XXIII-XXVIII, p. 213-280; 7 ch. XXIX-XXX, p. 281-298; 8. ch. XXXI- XII, p. 299-367.

A more detailed description of the Russian translation of *Thyrza* may follow once a xerox of the complete text has been made available.”

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As Dr. Postmus's steady research testifies, the Netherlands have been far less indifferent to Gissing's work than was commonly thought for years. Even in the barren fifties some people were reading him there. One of Bouwe Postmus's latest discoveries is the presence of Gissing and his long comment on the *Anabasis* in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* on pp. 270-71 of a volume of the *Klassieke Bibliotheek, Griekse Geschiedschrijvers* by Hub. Cuypers Jr. (Harlem: De Spaarnestad, 1951). Dr. Postmus has also exhumed from the many layers of old books in the Amsterdam bookshops – a paradise to the visitor – a third (unrecorded) edition of the collection of *Short Stories by Great Authors. No. 1 R. L. Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, G. Gissing* (1937), in which “Humblebee” was reprinted. Copies of *Contemporary English Prose*, with introductions and notes by A. G. Van Kranendonk (Groningen-Batavia: P. Noordhoff N.V.) have also been discovered. The book ran through at least three editions (1930, 1934 and 1947). Volume I begins with extracts from chapter III of *The Odd Women* and two extracts from *Henry Ryecroft* entitled “Autumn in Devon” and “London Reminiscences.” The second and third editions contain an excellent reproduction of one of the portraits taken by Elliott & Fry in 1901, and subsequently used by Shafer in his edition of *Workers in the Dawn*.

One wonders whether Professor Yoshifumi Hirado, whose new book is listed under “Recent Publications,” is aware of the bibliographical link between the four authors whose short stories he has translated. Maugham reviewed *By the Ionian Sea*, Galsworthy – a friend of Conrad and Hudson – was on the Committee which was formed in 1913 with a view to collecting funds for the foundation of a Gissing scholarship at the University of Manchester, and Katherine Mansfield revealed in a letter her inability to appreciate *Eve's Ransom*. It is strange that Professor Hirado and his countryman Mr. Masahiko Yahata should have been retranslating “The Light on the Tower” at about the same time. Besides, they have several predecessors. Could our Japanese readers tell us why this story especially appeals to the Eastern mind?

Mr. Yahata, who is instructor in English at Beppu University Junior College has written and published a short story, “In and Out of Dreams” (see “Recent Publications”), in which Gissing and his work are introduced in a way which is not altogether unprecedented. He has sent us an abstract of his piece and the translation of a review of it which appeared in the November 1993 issue of *Advance Oita*:

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The protagonist, Yoshinori Noguchi, was born and raised in Tokyo. He is an ambitious young man like Godwin Peak in *Born in Exile*. He yearns to become Japan's leading scholar of English literature by getting a post in a university in Tokyo. But he is rejected by every university there to which he applies for employment, and unwillingly accepts a post in a junior college, at Kagoshima, in the south of Japan.

When Noguchi leaves for Kagoshima, he is determined to return to Tokyo in less than

three years. But he soon finds his life in Kagoshima interesting because he meets the friendly staff and earnest students in his junior college, and also because the landscape of Kagoshima reminds him of his favourite book, *By the Ionian Sea*.

In his fourth year in Kagoshima, Noguchi meets a lady who graduated from a prominent university in Tokyo and has been working as a high-school teacher, and marries her. He discovers, however, that his married life with her is totally frustrating because of their extremely different senses of values.

Noguchi, then, is attracted to a certain girl student in his junior college. His wife suspects it and leaves Noguchi after a violent quarrel with him, though they do not divorce formally. In his despair, he gets badly drunk, soon falls asleep, and has a strange dream such as the poet did in "A Poet's Portmanteau." In his dream, Noguchi tries in vain to chase the girl student whom he is attracted to.

The next day, after reading through "Humblebee" in his office, Noguchi falls asleep again and has another dream in which the same girl reappears. In this dream, he divorces his wife and, to his disappointment, discovers that the girl is engaged to a young gentleman. But this man leaves her after he meets another lady from a better family. Then, the despairing girl is encouraged by Noguchi and falls in love with him. When his desire to marry her nearly comes true, Noguchi wakes up from the dream.

When he regrets having been forced back to reality, there is a phone call from his wife. She tells him that she is going to have his baby. Then his eye falls on the final paragraph of "Humblebee," which has been left open on his lap. "He had to begin life over again – that was all."

Other works by Gissing referred to in this fiction are *A Life's Morning*, *New Grub Street*, *The Odd Women*, and "The Fate of Humphrey Snell."

Mr. Yahata then translates the review of his story that appeared in *Advance Oita*. The reviewer, after summarizing the plot, made the following observations:

Noguchi's specialty is an English novelist, George Gissing. The author, Mr. Yahata, seems to be specializing in the same writer because he exhibits abundant knowledge of him.

This, however, has an adverse effect on Mr. Yahata's fiction. Noguchi's choices, his behaviour, and even the landscape of Kagoshima are explained merely by their connections with Gissing without being described for their own sake. It cannot be considered fiction but a mere introduction to Gissing. Although the present reviewer is ignorant of Gissing, it might be no

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exaggeration to say that Mr. Yahata's fiction is no more than an imitation of various patches from Gissing's works.

Despite its being such poor fiction, it still deserves attention because of its ingenious ending, "He had to begin life over again – that was all." Although it is a natural conclusion that every married couple comes to, who can predict this ending? Mr. Yahata writes very skilfully to bring about this unexpected ending. There are detestable Tokyo-oriented values and mediocre, vulgar characters, but his way of writing makes us feel as if he created them intentionally to be such. It can be said that Mr. Yahata makes effective use of "dreams."

Ours is an age of exhibitions and catalogues. Mark Samuels Lasner and Margaret Stetz, whose names have been associated with previous catalogues of exhibitions of literary and artistic material of the 1880s and 1890s, recently organised an exhibition commemorating the foundation of the *Yellow Book* in 1894. A catalogue has been published by the Houghton Library, Harvard, and duly listed in the *TLS*. Karl Beckson has sent the article which the *Harvard*

Gazette devoted to it ("A Timeless Quarterly: Houghton Library exhibition marks the innovation and influence of the *Yellow Book*," by Marvin Hightower) in its number for 4 March, pp. 3 and 9. It largely consists of an interview of Mark Samuels Lasner. The catalogue contains two entries of Gissing interest, the ALS to Ella Hepworth Dixon of 4 February 1895, recently published in Volume V of the *Collected Letters*, and the inevitable lithograph by William Rothenstein. Karl Beckson's own book, *London in the 1890s: A Cultural History*, which was reviewed in our last number, has many illustrations, some definitely naughty, that invite comparison with any listed in the Harvard catalogue. There are about fifty, including the 1884 portrait of Gissing rediscovered some years ago.

The Lilly Library, we are told, has organised an exhibition of its Gissing treasures formerly in the Carl H. Pforzheimer Library. No copy of the catalogue has yet reached us, but our informant assures us that it is not very different from the catalogue published by Quaritch.

Yet another catalogue of great interest is that issued by Sumner & Stillman, i.e. Richard Stillman Loomis, Jr., and Susan Sumner Loomis (P.O. Box 973, Yarmouth, ME 04096, Telephone (207) 846-6070). This catalogue 50 is entirely devoted to Gissing; it can already be regarded as a collector's item. It lists 229 books, letters and miscellaneous documents, with 9 pages of illustrations on which can be seen over 70 editions of Gissing's books, ranging from

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the renowned E. L. Allhusen-John Quinn-Jerome Kern-Jean Hersholt copy of *Workers in the Dawn* to the posthumous volumes of the interwar period. Especially interesting is the photo of the front cover of the very scarce Lippincott edition of *A Life's Morning* (1888) in original wrappers decorated in dark blue. Among the other treasures are the letter to Robert Foulsham Gissing of 1 September [1875] and a letter to Colles of 18 February 1897 (these two items have been acquired by the Beinecke Library), the signed contract with Dodd, Mead for *The Paying Guest*, the contract with Stokes for *The Town Traveller* signed by Gissing and Wells, and a photograph of Algernon, taken in 1882, which must have been kept by his grandfather until his death ten years later, and then have passed into the hands of Willie Stannard. Few collectors, one presumes, have ever had a chance of seeing the Lawrence & Bullen edition of *The Unclassed* with the Fenno editions on either side.

Splendidly produced catalogues from Dent and Oxford University Press have reached us. They confirm the availability of *Born in Exile* and *The Day of Silence and Other Stories* in Everyman's Library at £6.99 and £4.99 respectively, and of *The Nether World*, *New Grub Street* and *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* in the World's Classics at £5.99 for the first of these three titles and £4.99 for the last two. The Penguin edition of *The Odd Women* is reported to be available.

The library services of West Yorkshire have recently issued a leaflet and bookmarks in an attempt to make more people read Victorian novelists. The leaflet they have published, *The Great Victorian Novel: Twenty Major Titles*, lists *New Grub Street* among equally predictable titles, notably *Jane Eyre*, *The Woman in White*, *Bleak House*, *Middlemarch*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. *New Grub Street*, the brief description reads, "is about the commercialization of journalism, and the effect on national culture. The fulfilment of Gissing's predictions has given the novel revived prestige." Four editions of it are currently in print.

The production of Volume VI of the *Collected Letters* had reached an advanced stage by

late June. The period covered is July 1895-November 1897. It ends with a vision of Gissing struggling successfully with death at Cotrone, formerly Croton and now Crotone. The illustrations will include portraits of James and Rachel Wood, Herbert Heaton Sturmer and E. L. Allhusen. Dr. Enrico Sculco will appear in Volume VII. For want of space it has not been

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possible to reproduce a portrait of Wilfred Thesiger, the British consul at Taranto, but an excellent photograph of him will be found in his son's autobiography (Wilfred Thesiger, *The Life of My Choice*, Collins, 1988).

Gissing studies are apt to take an unexpected turn in some quarters. Angela C. Petyt of University College of Ripon and York St. John has written a study of word and sentence lengths in two Gissing short stories, "Brownie" and "A Yorkshire Lass." Her approach is both linguistic and mathematical; it is also an application of the method defined by C. S. Butler in his *Statistics in Linguistics* (1985). Miss Petyt concludes that "the results of the z-tests reveal that the word length for 'Brownie' and 'A Yorkshire Lass' have the same mean, but the mean for the sentence lengths in 'Brownie' is greater than the mean for the sentence lengths in 'A Yorkshire Lass.' This draws the conclusion that George Gissing did not greatly vary his morphological technique during his career, but he did refine his syntactic technique, making his sentences less convoluted – which rendered his writing more stylish, dramatic and 'readable.'"

It is well-known that reference works rarely satisfy specialists. A recent example is offered by the revised edition of the *Reference Guide to English Literature* (St. James's Press). If the entries contributed by David Grylls and Jacob Korg are worthy of their authors, the bibliographical entry by A. O. J. Cockshut belongs to the category of assessments that will rouse either mockery or indignation. The list of Gissing's works makes one wonder how Cockshut collected the information he gives. What is one to make of this: "*New Grub Street*, 1891; edited by Irving Howe, 1962"? Or of that: "*Gissing* (biography) by Gillian Tindall, 1973, as *The Born Exile*, 1974"? Why are only a few modern editions of the works given with the editors' names, the other titles being listed as though they had never been reprinted? In the biographical essay, the approach is old-fashioned, mistake-ridden, condescending and moralizing. Ah! Cockshut whines, if Gissing's attitude to the poor had been as satisfactory as Samuel Johnson's! He accuses his subject of snobbery, but only convinces us of his own snobbery. Is a critic who writes that after *The Odd Women* Gissing lost his inspiration worth reading? When he regards the novelist as a source of cultural pollution in the modern world, we wonder whether Cockshut is a disciple of Frank Swinnerton, who lived long enough to realize what nonsensical criticism he had produced in 1912.

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Our attention has been drawn to the fact that Jacob Korg's Harvester editions of *Thyrza* and *The Unclassed* are still available in hard cover at \$24.50 each from Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 440 Forsgate Drive, Cranbury, New Jersey 08512. Also a request has reached us which, we hope, will prompt some replies. Mr. Stephen Bottomore (Film – Television), of 27 Roderick Road, London NW3 2NN, Tel./Fax (+4471) 485-6438 writes:

I am currently writing a book about the early years of the cinema, from around 1895 when the first film shows took place, up to the 1st World War when cinema was well established. Part of the book will examine the reaction of important artists and writers to the early films, and any contacts they may have had with this new medium. I am looking for any references, even minor

ones, such as: in the correspondence/diaries of the author concerned, or allusions to the author's fictional characters visiting the cinema or commenting on it.

As he was writing in this period, it occurred to me that Gissing might well have mentioned film shows (sometimes called bioscope, moving picture or cinematograph shows at this time), or other aspects of the cinema in his writings.

Recent Publications

Volumes

Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas (eds.), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Five, 1892-1895*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994. Off-white paper-covered boards with a grey tape binding and, on the spine, gilt titling on dark green panel. Dark green dust-jacket with pattern in light green. xxxvi + 372 pages. \$60.00. ISBN 0-8214-1067-9.

George Gissing, *The Odd Women*, with an introduction by Margaret Walters, London: Virago Press, 1993. This is no. 31 in Virago Modern Classics. Pictorial paperback [xvi] + 336 pages. £5.99. ISBN 0-86068-140-8. This is the seventh impression.

Christina Sjöholm, "*The Vice of Wedlock*": *The Theme of Marriage in George Gissing's Novels*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis: Studia Anglistica Upsaliensia 85. Uppsala, 1994. Grey stiff covers in pictorial dust jacket. 144 pages. No price given. ISBN 91-554-3258-1.

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Distributor: Almqvist & Wiksell International, Box 4627, S-11691 Stockholm, Sweden.

Gwyn Neale, *All the Days Were Glorious: George Gissing in North Wales*, Llanrwst, Wales: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 1944. Pictorial wrappers. 56 pages. £2.95. ISBN 0-86381-286-4.

Pierre Coustillas and Francesco Marroni (eds.), *Merope* (University of Pescara), Anno V, n. 10, September 1993. Special number of 208 pages on Gissing available from the publisher, Marino Solfanelli Editore, C.P. 126, 66100 Chieti, Italy, for 15,000 lire. Contains eight articles by Jacob Korg, Mario Curreli, Francesco Badolato, Bouwe Postmus, Francesco Marroni, Pierre Coustillas, Maria Teresa Chialant and Emanuela Ettore, with two reviews of recent Gissing books.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Masahiko Yahata, "Yume no uchisoto" ("In and Out of Dreams"), *Mu* (an annual literary magazine), no. 7, July 1993, pp. 51-97. A short story of marked Gissing interest. It was reviewed by Susumu Maeda in the November 1993 issue of *Advance Oita*, p. 122. See "Notes and News."

Laurel Brake, "Reviews," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Winter 1993, Vol. XXVI, no. 4, pp. 244-46. Review of Carol L. Bernstein's *The Celebration of Scandal: Toward the Sublime in Victorian Urban Fiction*, with some comment on Gissing.

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David Trotter, *The English Novel in History 1895-1920*, London: Routledge, 1993. Discusses or alludes to Gissing's works on some twenty pages.

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Beatrice Didier (ed), *Dictionnaire Universel des Littératures*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994. 3 vols. The Gissing entry (pp. 1332-33), as well as eight others, was written by Pierre Coustillas.

William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel 1880-1940*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. The index refers to many passages on Gissing, and on *The Whirlpool* in particular. The book will be reviewed in a subsequent number.

Martin Seymour-Smith, *Hardy*, London: Bloomsbury, 1994. An unreliable biography in which Gissing appears on ten occasions in a way that is unacceptable to serious scholars.

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Yoshifumi Hirado, *Life and Literature*, Kumamoto-shi, Centre for Information and Culture, 1994. Mr. Hirado has collected a number of papers on different subjects: dogs, carp, Japanese and foreign coins. The second part of his book consists of eight short stories in translation – two by Gissing ("The Schoolmaster's Vision," pp. 116-34, and "The Light on the Tower," pp. 135-53) and two each by Galsworthy, Katherine Mansfield, and Somerset Maugham. The book can be obtained from the publisher at the Kumamoto Nichi-Nichi Shimbun [i.e. the Kumamoto Daily Newspaper], 2-23 Kamidori-cho, Kumamoto-shi.

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