

The Gissing Journal

Volume XLVII, Number 1, January 2011

“More than most men am I dependent on sympathy to bring out the best that is in me.”

Commonplace Book

William Gissing Stannard, Memorialist History and Legend: A Rambling Commentary

PIERRE COUSTILLAS

The acquisition by the Gissing Trust in Wakefield of what Anthony Petyt called the Sinden Bequest, that is books, letters and papers which until 1950 were the property of William Gissing Stannard (1868-1950), has raised a large number of problems of a biographical nature, also answered some questions and helped to confirm a few statements which I made in 1990 in my genealogical essay, the main function of which was to place Gissing and his familiars in a context that none of his biographers had ever dreamt of researching. The art of biography has made serious progress since Gissing himself, in a late letter to Edward Clodd, disapproved of the flow of gossip that was being published on Carlyle's private life in books and in the press. Still when Gissing's younger son, Alfred, after realising that his uncle Algernon would never keep his promise to write a biography of his brother, timidly enquired into the past of his own family, he quickly became aware that various disturbing stories had been set afloat as far back as the last two decades of the eighteenth century and that their truth had to be verified. He certainly had in hand at the time two letters from his great-grandfather—Robert Foulsham Gissing—to Algernon on genealogical matters which we reproduce in part below.¹ As these letters thickened the mysteries rather than dispelled them, Alfred decided to consult his father's cousin William Gissing Stannard (1868-1950), whom he knew to have been in touch with his father in the latter's early London days, when Willie, the son of William and Ann Stannard, was still a schoolboy.

Finding his cousin's address after decades of mutual silence might have been an almost insuperable difficulty but chance, as Alfred says in his letter of 9 June 1936, for once was helpful and the two relatives were to all appearances very pleased at the renewal of acquaintance between the two branches of the family.

Barbon,/ Westmorland,
Via Carnforth,
5 June 1936

Dear Mr. Stannard,

You will be surprised to receive a letter from me, as I believe you have been out of touch with this side of the family for half a century or so. But I think you knew my father, George Gissing, well in his early London years, and I am wondering whether you would be able most kindly to send me a few personal notes of your contact with him, which might be embodied in a life of him which I am just completing for publication some years hence. I would on no account trouble you to say much, but I thought you might happen to have a few personal recollections worth recording. Please do not trouble if not.

I should also be very pleased to have a detail or two about Mr. Paul Rahardt, if you happen to know anything. What he was like, and whether any of his family are still alive.

Please forgive my confronting you with so many questions when you do not even know me, but there are other points I thought you might happen to recollect something about. Do you know anything about Miss E. S. Whittington who was in close touch with the Gissings at Badingham, Suffolk many years ago? And also do you happen to have heard in conversation where the father of Robert Foulsham Gissing was born?

I fear this is all too long ago, and you must not trouble about such things if I have asked too much. I presume you have no knowledge of the Wallers?

I have always been quite out of touch with other branches of our family, though I know your name well, as my father always spoke of you in the friendliest and most appreciative of terms. That is why I venture to trouble you with such a letter as this.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely

A. C. Gissing

I wonder if you came across my father's 1st wife?

Alfred's first letter shows his anxiety to learn as much as possible about his family that neither his uncle Algernon nor his aunt Ellen (Margaret had died in 1930) could guess or explain; he was only acquainted with what he had read in his father's diary and in letters to members of his family. He could not know whether the Stannards and the Rahardts had borne his father a grudge after he had broken away from them over half a century before, but he could reasonably suspect that despite his distinguished literary achievements his father had a bad name in some branches of the family. So Willie's genial response shows that whatever inherited resent-ment there

could still lurk among the descendants of people who had been “deserted” by George no longer existed. Alfred must have drawn some comfort from his realization that his father’s work had not been totally ignored by the Stannards even though they were not known to have been interested in artistic and intellectual matters in general. Alfred’s mention of Miss Whittington, who had been such a disinterested well-wisher to the Gissing family in the old days at Badingham, his interest in his own family and its origin before the time when Robert Foulsham Gissing, the novelist’s and Willie’s grandfather, was professionally active, were evidence that Alfred had heard a few things about the remote history of the family. The questions about Nell and about the father of Robert Foulsham Gissing are bound to have struck Willie as questions about the shady past of the family. Margaret Clark, who married Samuel Gissing in Eye, Suffolk on 4 July 1769, had been a widow for several years when her son Tobias, Robert Foulsham’s father, was born in 1781, and she may well have been the originator of the legend about the German ancestry of the family. That her seducer may have been a Continental traveller is of course a possibility in view of the woollen trade between East Anglia and the Continent at the time but there is no shadow of a document to support such an assumption. It was relatively easy for Margaret Gissing to pass off the spurious story of Tobias’s birth as one that did her no great discredit in an age when illegitimacy was common enough. In his correspondence with his grandson Algernon, Robert Foulsham Gissing was merely repeating, without giving any dates of course, the legend born of Margaret Clark Gissing’s dubious situation—or did Tobias make it up himself?

The next item of correspondence shows with what alacrity Willie replied to his cousin. His enthusiasm unexpectedly breaks out in the quotation from Matthew Arnold, a cultural reminiscence which, incidentally, harmonizes with Gissing’s favourable impressions of Willie when he had heard from him in Florence in early January 1889, a letter which had surprised him on account of the intellectual development it showed.

Jesmond/14 Manor View,/ Squires Lane/Finchley, N.
6 June 1936

Dear Mr. Gissing,

It was, indeed, a surprise to receive your letter this morning but a very pleasant surprise.

After I had read your letter through I said with Matthew Arnold “Quick, thy tablets Memory!”

It will afford me a real pleasure to let you have in a week or so's time some personal notes about your Father.

My first remembrance of the days were when he came to London to sit for his Matric. With what splendid results you know well.

Grandfather Robert Gissing—who had lived with my Mother from the time that his wife died—met him and he stayed with us in Paddington those days.

You never had the pleasure and delight of converse with Robert Foulsham Gissing. He was a man of wide and useful knowledge and an excellent conversationalist. It was my privilege and delight to be with him to the end of his life.

Yes. I can tell you something too of Paul Rahardt. His son Claude and his daughter Maud are still alive.

Of Miss Whittington too I know a little. She often stayed at Badingham in my Mother's days there.

I have an old Book—in which Grandfather Robert entered quite a number of family notes. I will turn it up and see if I can tell you of his Father.

The Wallers belong to Grandmother Jane's side. She was Jane Hall Waller before marriage. Quakers of Halesworth.

But much of this I must reserve for my fuller notes.

Yes I knew your Father's first wife Helen Harrison. I spent a holiday with them just off Gower Street once and your Father and I visited the British Museum, my first introduction to that Museum.

I too have the happiest and friendliest memories of your Father and of those splendid letters I had from him when he was in Italy. My "den" has to-day on its walls photos he sent me from Florence.

My wife and I have arranged—some time ago—to spend our holiday this year at the Windermere Hydro Hotel from July 25 to Aug. 8 and if it is convenient to you would be delighted to see you there one day in that period. It would be nice for us all to chat things over.

I think you are about 15 or 20 miles from Windermere. For us it will be a *terra nuova*.

You will not mind me expressing my surprise at how you found my present address. It is 18 years since I left Paddington.

My wife and I have often wondered if Cousin Algernon is alive. We last heard of him at Broadway Worcester.

Is that life of Holman Hunt recently published by your pen?

I hope you will be able to make that Morley Roberts book about your Father look silly... My dear Mother was intensely annoyed when she read it.

But there, what a lot we shall have to talk over.

Just let me know the points you want and I will try to fill in the gaps.

My wife joins me in kindest regards and best wishes.

Yours sincerely
W^m Gissing Stannard
PS. You do write like your Father

The survey of Willie's recollections as revived in his letter is by far more accurate in its many details than the Notes that were to follow, and they are easy enough to annotate. No other primary source—let this be acknowledged—throws any light on the material circumstances under which Gissing sat for matriculation.² The house occupied by the Stannards stood at 12 Braden Street in the district of Paddington. There lived his uncle William (1840-1923), a decorator, and his aunt Ann (1842-1925) who had married in 1866 at Badingham, Suffolk, and with whom Gissing's grandfather had dwelt from the time his wife, Jane Hall Waller (1805-1864), died. They had married in Theberton, where Jane's father kept the White Lion inn, in 1828 and she had died at Badingham. As for Gissing's other uncle, Paul Rahardt (1840-1905), he was the son of a Berlin merchant, and his professional capacities, first as an engine-fitter, then as a grocer, seem to have been rather modest. Gissing quickly came to detest him on account of his pretentious manners and dishonest dealings. The description of him that Willie gives in his notes, if placed by the side of Gissing's distrust, point to an unrewarding character. Neither his son Claude nor his daughter Maud carried on the German tradition of which Paul can be regarded as the only genuine vector. Willie, who obviously liked his grandfather and enjoyed hearing him reminisce about the East Anglian world of his youth, probably had a tendency to embellish the old man's talent for reviving family life as it was in the countryside, saying nothing of the poverty which handicapped his ancestors earlier in the century. A counter image of daily life, of domestic unhappiness such as Tobias's irresponsible behaviour entailed, will soon be given in this journal by a pathetic letter from his wife Judith Gissing (1780-1841), to some of her children, the eldest of whom was Robert Foulsham Gissing, the grandfather lovingly remembered by Willie.

We then catch a glimpse of the quasi-mythical Miss Ellen Sophia Whittington, to whom Gissing's father paid fully deserved homage in one or two of his poems. Information about her will be found in the genealogical essay which precedes Gissing's earliest letters in Volume I of his collected correspondence. It is no exaggeration to say that but for her generosity to the novelist's family, the poetical works of Thomas Waller Gissing, for whose schooling she had paid, would never have lived beyond the manuscript stage and Gissing himself in turn would not have been

encouraged to serve such a profitable poetical apprenticeship under his father's guidance. She was a revered background presence, as was her companion "aunt Emily." That a photograph of her has been preserved by Gissing's descendants must be seen as a genuine act of piety.

Of the "old Book" in which Willie's grandfather entered family notes not a trace remains, but it is likely that Willie's own notes published in the present article incorporate a fair proportion of them. One entry at least, that which deals with the parenthood of Tobias, is likely to have invited editing in its original form, as noted above. The notebook which John is said to have kept (are we to understand John Gissing, 1808-74, the brother of Robert Foulsham Gissing, who married Mary Ann Sawyer, 1817-53, or John Foulsham Gissing, 1838-89, a man of the next generation, a photograph of whom is in the Sinden Bequest?) is another lost document.

As he himself explains, the Wallers belonged to the side of his grandmother Jane Hall Waller, that is the wife of Robert Foulsham Gissing, of whom a photograph was taken by the Hall brothers in Wakefield, neighbours of the Gissing family that the novelist's father liked to patronize. Although Willie refers his cousin to the Quakers of Halesworth, the small town in which Thomas Waller Gissing was born, he is wrong. The said grandmother was born at Saxmundham, she married R. F. Gissing at Theberton and, like some other members of her family, was buried at Badingham, where her grave can be seen to this day.

Like all his allusions to his relatives, Willie's mention of Nell is characteristic of his (perhaps unconscious) tendency to whitewash the past. The phrase "I spent a holiday with them" rings false. The idea of Willie spending a *holiday* with his cousin George in one of the shabby lodgings "just off Gower Street" must be downgraded to a short visit which to Gissing could only cause embarrassment, and the visit to the British Museum had better be viewed as a chance that Gissing had to whisk his cousin away from Nell's presence. The rest of this first and only letter extant from Willie, the original of which is held by Xavier Pétremand, shows that by the mid-thirties he was largely out of touch with the Gissing world. Otherwise he could have told Alfred that on hearing through the press of George's death in the Pyrenees he had sent a letter to the editor of the *Daily Chronicle* in which he said that the paper's "kind and sympathetic notice of my cousin George Gissing's death" "was the first intimation he had of it." He also stressed the coincidence that the novelist's death had occurred on the same day as that of his father thirty-three years earlier, and the fact that very few if any obituaries had mentioned his first novel,

Workers in the Dawn. Did he remember in 1936, one wonders, that in that same published letter he had bravely taken Gissing's defence in the face of published critics: "Despite the fact that so many of his works wore a drab, still those who knew him best recognised that the drab was the colour of his experience, and that beneath the surface there was much golden sunshine" (*Daily Chronicle*, 31 December 1903, p. 5).

Willie could also have enlightened his correspondent as to the identity of his own wife, seven years his senior, who, almost incredibly, was the daughter of his great-uncle, Charles Gissing (1823-66), the youngest brother of Robert Foulsham Gissing, with whom Willie lived until 1892. Of Algernon, an adept at borrowing right and left sums he never refunded, he had lost sight, indirect evidence that this cousin had not been tapped! His last novel, a commercial failure like its predecessors, had been published on the eve of the Great War and only *The Footpath Way in Gloucestershire* had brought his name again to the attention of the reading public in 1924.

Alfred's invitation to Willie to visit him and Ellen is typical of the man; he is more anxious to list possible obstacles in the visitor's way than to play down any difficulties that might arise during the journey. He only warms up at the prospect of receiving Willie's notes about his father and his first wife. His apologetic tone accords well with some passages in his biography: "It was all a very sad affair, and I should never have proposed to write a biography in detail was it not for what Morley Roberts and Wells have published." The influence of the aunts on their nephew can here be read between the lines. The times were not ripe, we feel, on many accounts for a candid, full-length biography of a writer whom too few people could understand, and his younger son's timidity was of bad omen.

Barbon,/Westmorland,
Via Carnforth,
9 June 1936

Dear Mr. Stannard,

I am delighted to get your kind and most interesting letter. It seems to connect me with the good old days known only through the imagination. To meet you was more than I had hoped, as I am a poor traveller and rarely come to the south. I shall be very pleased indeed to have this glimpse of you when you come to Windermere. But how would it be for you and Mrs. Stannard to come over here for lunch to us for the afternoon? ["for lunch" was added above the line, and the rest of the sentence was not cancelled]

My aunt Ellen Sophia Gissing (named after Miss Whittington) is with me, and we have a tiny cottage, or rather bungalow on the outskirts of this little village. I wish it were larger and that we could ask you to spend the

night here as well, but I am sure we should make the utmost of an afternoon, and we should be both delighted to see you, if you will forgive the simplicity of everything about us!

The Windermere Hydro Hotel

The only difficulty to this proposal is that our country here, though beautiful, can't compare with the Lake District, and you may not wish to sacrifice a day in so short a holiday. In that case please tell me quite frankly, and then we might both, if you will kindly allow us to, pay you a visit at Windermere.

I am sure you will be delighted with the lakes if you have never seen them. Perhaps you know that my grandfather (T. W. Gissing) was married at Grasmere.

It is most kind of you to be willing to send me some reminiscences of my father and "Nell." Any little personal word or two about them would be invaluable. It was all a very sad affair, and I should never have proposed to write a biography in detail was it not for what Morley Roberts and Wells have published. It is the fact that students of father's life all go to these writings for information, that makes me feel the desirability of a true biography, however full of misfortunes and mismanagements it may be. But of course there were many extenuating circumstances and far more things to be admired than appear from the books of the present "biographers."

I am delighted to read what you say of R. F. Gissing. I have two letters from him to my uncle Algernon (who is now with his wife and family near Oxford) and it struck me in reading them that he was a man of understanding and sense. The book of family notes you possess must be a real treasure. Perhaps when we meet I shall hear something about them.

The following are some of the points about which I am seeking information:

Anything about Miss Whittington.

The parents and birthplace of Tobias Gissing.

Anything about the old Wallers.

When R. F. Gissing left Suffolk for London, and whether he was at Halesworth or Badingham before he left. When he died.

In a letter R. F. G. says that the grandfather of Tobias came originally from Germany. I don't see how this can be correct, but perhaps you know about it.

Why did Miss Whittington devote herself to my grandfather, T. W. G., from his infancy onwards? She left him her family Bible and many private papers, and had been a real benefactress.

But please don't give yourself a great deal of trouble over these.

You ask how I got your address, and I do not wonder at your surprise. You would never be able to guess how it came to me. Some time ago I got the verger of Halesworth Church to look up some Gissings in the registers. He happened to know of Mrs. Mann of Darsham and her connection with Badingham, paid her a flying visit, and hence the address! Now I am wondering whether Mrs. Mann can be the daughter (Alice Judith, I think) of R. F. G.'s sister Mary Ann, who married W^m Ettridge.

Yes, the Holman Hunt book was mine. It was well received by the Times Literary Supplement and other papers, but abused by the supporters of "impressionism," who hate the very name of Holman Hunt! I happen to know his son, who gave me much assistance with the book. It is rather an experiment, but seems to have done good, as I have had letters of appreciation from Canada and India. Holman Hunt was a fine fellow.

I have been doing a fair amount of writing for some years—articles etc, and father's biography, not yet finished, has taken me a good time.

During the war I was in France, India, Mesopotamia and Constantinople. Escaped actual damage, but have had health troubles since! Unhappily I have to live on rather a simple diet, which makes travelling about troublesome, but apart from that, things are not going badly. My aunt is a delightful companion—quite as nice, I think, as Ellen Sophia Whittington must have been. But she is getting on in years and has to curtail her activities. She will be very pleased to meet a cousin whom she has never seen.

My uncle Algernon is still in the best of health. One of his sons is abroad and another in Edinburgh. The latter broadcasts occasionally and

writes articles sometimes for the Radio Times about his adventures in Canada.

But there is so much to say, and I could write several pages more!

With kindest regards from both of us to yourself and Mrs. Stannard and many thanks for the assistance you are kindly giving me

Yours sincerely

A. C. Gissing

The journey between Windermere and Barbon is quite simple, and the scenery is very fine.

The fact that T. W. Gissing married Margaret Bedford at Grasmere, a way for him of paying homage to Wordsworth, his favourite poet, cannot have been unknown to the Stannards, but Willie must have welcomed the implicit promise to communicate the grandfather's letters to Algernon which, as can be seen below, were not more than dusty answers to his grandson's enquiry about the origin of the Gissing family, feeble echoes of the imaginary construction sprung from Margaret Clark Gissing, the repentant illicit mother of Tobias, or perhaps from Tobias himself. The series of questions addressed to Willie shows Alfred determination to cleanse the genealogy of the family of the inaccuracies which must have dogged generation after generation until the late twentieth century.

In his letter of 9 June Alfred came as near as he could without consulting old official records in Suffolk to the entry at the Ipswich Record Office which would have acted upon him as an eye opener and would have dispelled the old dreams of snobbish Algernon, still alive in 1936, though perhaps not in the best of health, as Alfred believed. Willie must have been able to tell his cousin that at the time his grandfather left Suffolk for London, R. F. G. no longer lived at Halesworth, where Thomas Waller Gissing was born on 2 August 1829, but at Badingham, where he lived from the early 1830s, and where several Gissing graves can still be seen in the churchyard.

That Alfred, whose knowledge of the remote branches of his family on the paternal side was so patchy, should have known of the existence of Alice Judith Etridge, is a matter of surprise since it is only very recently that her mother, Mary Ann Gissing (1811-49), the eldest daughter of Tobias, has been discovered to have married. Alice Judith Etridge (1846-1924) remained single, and Mrs. Mann, who supplied Willie Stannard's address, has not been identified. Naturally Alfred was on safer ground when he answered Willie's question about his study of Holman Hunt's life and work, although his hostility to impressionism is an obvious blind spot. His siding with traditionalist art critics could only surprise readers ignorant

of the all-too-successful influence his aunts had on him. Their incapacity to understand Gissing's artistic originality and courage resulted in a philosophical handicap which can only be pronounced Victorian in an age when the common attitude to things Victorian had become that of Lytton Strachey in his lucid satire of *Eminent Victorians*.

The few details Alfred gives about his life and activities during and since the Great War should be read in conjunction with the article his grandson contributed to the present journal in the early 1990s. Fortunately for him he spent most of the war years away from the battlefields of northern France and, as regards his father's posthumous interests which, it must be conceded, were extremely complex, he was to uphold them in a few articles and volumes which need not be listed here. The outbreak of the second world war was to sound the knell of his modest literary hopes and the return of peace after the sharp decline of interest in his father's fiction, attended as it was by deep changes in popular literary estimations, made him retire gloomily from the fringes of artistic life. He was content to watch from afar the poorly documented careers of Algernon's two sons, Roland and Alwin, the former achieving some success as a landscape painter in Canada, where his rather gaudy paintings found buyers, the latter as an occasional writer of reminiscences of his life in the same country.

14 July 1936

My dear Cousin William,

I can't thank you enough for your great kindness in making this fine set of notes for me. Though I have not yet had time to read them I can see by a glance here and there that they are full of interest and that they clear up many of my difficulties. My only regret is that without knowing it I troubled you at such a busy moment. It is really good of you to send me such a clear and excellent account, and we will talk of various things when you come, and perhaps in Windermere, as you are so kind as to invite us.

Now for your letter. We *do want* you both to come over to us, but you must tell us quite frankly, should it occur to you at any time, that in so short a period of rest the annoyance of travel had better be avoided. We know well enough what it is to have only a week or so of repose after many months of application. However we hope and trust that the journey will offer no real difficulty. There are two simple changes by the 'bus route, and I don't think you would be in the least troubled by these as there is no walking to be done, and the service is excellent.

Aunt Nellie reminds me that you would probably be glad to avoid the bank holiday crush. She suggests a date in her letter to Cousin Judith, but please choose whichever day suits you best. Your hotel at Windermere will

no doubt be away from the main road. The Lake District is no longer what it used to be, and the roads are one continual torrent of traffic of every kind throughout the day. We look back longingly to the old coaching days, when we used to sit behind a team of horses and listen to the driver's account of the various places of interest on the route! The drive from Windermere station to Grasmere was a real delight in those days.

You will love every inch of the landscape and especially the views in the direction of Ambleside. And the air of those parts is so full of the scent of sea and moorland that a couple of days will invigorate you both.

I have looked up all the 'buses, and the following strikes me as easiest for you. I wish there was a later one from Barbon in the evening, but there is nothing until the last 'bus which gets you back after 10 p.m.

Windermere Station	10.25	Barbon dep.	4.47
Kendal Town Hall	11.0	Sedbergh arr.	5.13
“	dep. 11.28	“	dep. 5.20
Sedbergh	arr. 12.13	Kendal	arr. 6.5
“	dep. 12.20	“	dep. 6.12, 6.28
Barbon	arr. 12.46	Windermere	6.45, 7.1

Change at Kendal and Sedbergh. I know you will ask carefully about exact starting places.

We always find the journey very simple and easy, and the delightful scenery makes the time pass quickly. An earlier 'bus from W. runs soon after 8 a.m., but this is too soon for holiday-makers!

You will find that we are great lovers of simplicity, and that our life here is somewhat Arcadian. You shall have a quiet afternoon, and we will on no account tire you with too much talk. It is most fortunate that you are coming northwards.

Yours with many thanks and the kindest wishes to you both

A. C. Gissing

P.S. I have just read through your most absorbing notes. They make me realise how much trouble I have given you. There are many interesting revelations I could comment upon, but there will be time for that later. You may be interested to hear some of *my* notes when you come.

I had no idea that Emily Waller was so well educated.

The anecdote of the Lion inn is interesting, and perhaps I may hear some more when you come. Also a little about the book of John Gissing.

I had no idea that R. F. G. kept the Badingham post office in addition to the other business. I wonder whether his house was attached to the shop or quite apart.

Your reminiscences of father in London throw fresh light on his early life. I don't wonder that your mother was grieved when she read of his poverty and sufferings. And I should think that parts of *Henry Ryecroft* would bring questions to her mind. There was he, living the life of a

struggling exile, when at his very door was the assistance that he so badly needed. I never realised before that he refused to avail himself of all the kindness of your mother and the comforts of her home, and I think that this ought to be made clear in the Life.

The account of father which you thought of publishing would be full of interest and valuable.

Little did father know that you were present when Miss Collet spoke, and that you opposed Morley Roberts so opportunely.

Miss C. is still alive, and I hear from her periodically. She was a real friend, not a sham one like Roberts and Wells.

Again very many thanks.

The receipt of Willie's Notes on the Gissing family apparently made Alfred realize that his invitation had lacked warmth and that he could borrow useful details about his own father as he was in the days of his occasional visits to 12 Braden Street. Some of his comments on the Notes reveal as much about him as they throw light on those relatives that with obvious impatience Gissing called "the Paddington People." From no other source had we learnt that when Clara Collet had lectured on Gissing Willie, who had probably heard through the press of the forthcoming event, was in the audience. If Alfred failed to keep the many letters he received from her, she kept his, which show in places that Alfred, as in his biography, was inclined to "whitewash" what he disapproved of in his father.

On 27 July Alfred wrote again to Willie, a mere postcard, mainly about his forthcoming visit:

Many thanks for your letter. We are greatly looking forward to Wednesday and shall meet you at the 'bus. Would you kindly ask that it might stop just before it enters Barbon village at the lane on the right leading to the Vicarage. The conductor will know. We thought of you on Saturday and hoped you might at any rate arrive in sunshine. Surely the weather will improve now. We do want you to see Grasmere under good conditions. Grandfather spent the night at the Swan Inn (now enlarged) and was married the next day in the old church. The 'bus ride up the Langdale valley and on to Coniston is one of the grandest in the district.

The best of wishes for your holiday,

A. C. G.

The meeting between the two cousins, of whose conversation one would like to have a recording, took place on Friday, 31 July 1936, and is likely to have been of greater profit to Alfred, who was still unborn in the days when Willie knew George. On 4 August, before the Stannards left their hotel at Windermere, Alfred commented on the visit in another letter to Willie:

My dear Cousin William,

After all your kindness to us on Friday I must send you a line before you leave the north to wish you every happiness for the remainder of your holiday and a pleasant journey back to London.

I don't want to write in a way that may read like mere verbiage, but I must just say what a real delight it has been to both of us to come across in this accidental way two such relatives as yourselves. It is a real happiness and privilege to know you, and I only wish that some kind assistant (like the Halesworth verger!) had come forward and given us your address in my years of greater activity. But never mind, England is a small country and we shall no doubt be able to meet again on more than one occasion. Don't regard this season as typical of the Lake District. It is not at all, and if you are able to come north another year you will no doubt be given a far sunnier welcome.

I have eagerly absorbed all that you have told us about our family. It is far more interesting to me than a novel. I have often tried to imagine myself among you all in London in the old days,—Grandfather Robert, Aunt Ann, Aunt Maria (I omit the prefix “great”!), and they were real people to me in an imaginative way, but you and Cousin Judith seem to have added, by your presence, a greater reality to them. I know from this glimpse of yourselves that they were people of real understanding, kindness and sympathy,—a joy to all who were in touch with them. Well, I mustn't say much more, or you will say that it is mere talk. However, I must add that Uncle Alge's sudden liking for the photograph of Cousin Judith showed remarkably good judgement, and I have told him so!

As we imagined, he tells us that he remembers absolutely nothing of any of you, and that he can't even recall you as a boy. He always says that he has no memory whatever. I do wish he had been with us when you came, for I know how delighted he would have been. I think I told you of his family. The eldest daughter, Enid, has been in Edinburgh most of her life working with a large insurance company. Katherine, the next, is at home with her mother and father, and Margaret is married and lives almost next-door to them. The elder son (Roland) is in Canada earning a living as a landscape painter, and Alwin hovers between Edinburgh and Northumberland, writing and broadcasting for the Scottish Regional. We seem to have been rather selfish in expecting all the news to come from your side.

I will send you my notes on Tobias, but if you like I should be very pleased to send you later a typed copy of the whole of my brief account. The only thing is that you know more about such matters than I do, and perhaps the Tobias notes are all you need. With regard to those latest revelations (which may yet perhaps prove incorrect), long before I had learnt anything about our family, at the age of 15 or 16, I used to say that my temperament was German rather than English! It is interesting to find that father's greatest

friend was a German,—Eduard Bertz by name, and referred to in *Henry Ryecroft* as “E. B.”

We are both rather excited about the notes you have at home, which may throw some light upon this subject. You referred to photographs of your mother and Grandmother Jane Hall Gissing. I wonder whether these are at all accessible. I hardly like to trouble you after all you have already done, but I would give worlds to have copies of these photographs, and I would of course insist on paying the photographer, if the originals could be got hold of without great difficulty. Am I right in concluding that the colour of father’s hair is a link between him and his grandmother? By the way, if you should ever want any of father’s books, or anything else of the kind, do let me know. Many are out of print, and seeing how much he is discussed and written about in America and on the Continent it is surprising what a small sale the few books have that are in print. His name seems to live, but his works are neglected by the general public. Quite lately I got from America a new copy of *Workers in the Dawn* recently published. It was a great surprise.

I don’t know when our proposed visit to Suffolk will take place. Perhaps next year. I do wish we could have met you at Badingham, but I fear you are tied to London most of the time.

Thank you a thousand times for that delightful afternoon. It was one of those occasions not easily forgotten.

With love and all good wishes to you both,
Alfred C. Gissing

He certainly told the truth when writing that it was far more interesting to him than a novel for the members of his family who had known his father were all men and women who had understood him very imperfectly. Willie, it would seem, did not share most of their prejudices, born of a conventional view of life. But, sad to say, if Alfred kept his promise to send his cousin his own notes on Tobias, he did not make much of them in his biography of his father, in the final version of which one or two copies have survived. Perhaps inevitably as time is the supreme destroyer, the photograph of Ann Gissing Stannard referred to by Alfred as being in Willie’s possession is not recoverable, but one of Jane Hall Waller has successfully so far resisted the ravages of time. The lack of identification of a number of photographs in the Sinden bequest is likely to remain an insuperable handicap.

The copy of *Workers in the Dawn* received by Alfred may have been a surprise to him, but he was well aware that efforts had been made in America to reprint his father’s first novel; he knew notably of the still-born edition to which Rebecca West wrote an execrable introduction which was rejected in 1929. Alfred had in his library an unbound copy of the reset text

of the novel which, among other elements, proves that he was not ignorant of all the critical and editorial work which was being done on his father's books. In his distinguished critical edition of *Workers*, Robert Shafer was intelligently (and severely) critical of the deplorable contributions to Gissing studies by Morley Roberts, Frank Swinnerton and Alfred's uncle and aunt Algernon and Ellen Gissing. Of his own insufficiencies Alfred never gave any sign of consciousness. If anything Willie's visit was an encouragement to pursue his work on Gissing. The last concrete forms of it were to be the ultimate collection of short stories issued under the imprint of Michael Joseph in 1938 and the capable article on *Veranilda* he published in the *National Review* in January 1937.

A letter from Ellen Gissing to Willie's wife, also dated 4 August 1936, completes the set of letters bequeathed to the Gissing Centre:

My dear Judith,

We enjoyed ourselves very much in our afternoon with you both on Friday, and shall always think of it with joy. We were fortunate in the day, certainly, considering the weather since then. Each day Alfred and I have lamented that you should be having such bad weather—but I am sure you will not ascribe it to "the Lakes," for it is the same all over England, isn't it? Perhaps worse. I am very sorry for the farmers to see their hay being spoiled.

I hope you are feeling a little rested, both of you, but if only you could have had a blaze of sun, in which to bask. I think Cousin William said that he loved hot weather.

It will be a pleasant thought that if we are spending, even one day, in London we can call in and see you, and perhaps see one of your sons too.

With many good wishes for the remainder of your stay and a good journey back

Yours affectionately

Ellen Gissing

What a glorious view you have from your hotel!

Out of courtesy Willie refrained from suggesting why, in his opinion and in his mother's, Gissing had "deserted" the Stannard side of his family. It is difficult to believe that he failed to understand that the rift was cultural in nature. Gissing's correspondence with Algernon makes this crystal clear. In his early London days visiting the Stannards and the Rahardts became more and more tedious to him. So in a way the necessity to move from lodgings to lodgings on account of his wife's dissolute behaviour made things easier for him when he came to think of those uncles and aunts whose lives were purely material.

WILLIAM STANNARD'S NOTES ON GEORGE GISSING

About your Father

My first remembrance of your Father was when he came to London to sit for Matric.

Grandfather Robert & I went to S. Pancras to meet him. He was then a tall palefaced youth with reddish hair & shy.

There was then a gap of a few years, and your Father used to come to us about twice a week. He was then doing tutorial work and he used to relate with much glee the denseness or the oddity of some of his pupils much to the delight of my Mother and Grandfather.

When I used to come in from school I often found him by the fire with our favourite old cat comfortably placed on his knees.

The London of those days was full [?] of street cries and the peculiarity of intonation & variety of the callers much intrigued your Father.

There was one man who brought round Watercress which he always called Watercreases. "What does he say Aunt?" your Father asked. "Why George he is selling watercress," my mother replied. "Then why does he say Watercreases."

Later years. I am sure these oddities were only familiars. In the same way vendors of whelks used to say "Fine Almond whelks" meaning "Ormonde whelks" why I have never learned.

From the interest London cries evoked came that chapter of "Whitecross on a Saturday night."³

Your Father was living at that time in the Gower Street district so as to be near the British Museum.⁴ It was probably then that he came in touch with Herr Most⁵ of the German journal 'Freiheit' I heard a lot about in those years late 70s & early 80s.

Somewhere in this period your Father lectured at the Progressive Club Notting Hill Gate, one of the centres of the Radical Party under Sir C. Dilke & J. B. Firth, the MPs for old Chelsea. The Chelsea boundaries then included Kensington. My Father was a member of the Club and I went with them. I think it must have been a Sunday evening.⁶

A Frenchman, one Arthaud was also a member.⁷ He had been in the 1871 campaign & left France after. He was a tailor by trade & gave me a French "abecedaire" part of which I used in the French lessons your Father used to give me on sundry evenings after school. Arthaud used to enjoy an evening's chat with your Father in French.

During the time your Father was tutor to Austin Harrison & his brother in Westbourne Terrace he usually came in to ours as we only lived about 10 minutes from Westbourne Terrace. He always spoke in the highest terms of the Harrisons. After your Father's death Austin Harrison wrote what we regarded as the finest notice of him.⁸

Somewhere about this time 'A Life's Morning' appeared & was well received. Was this the work or was it "The Unclassed" which Gladstone reviewed?⁹

For a time your Father lived in Robert Street off Hampstead Road.¹⁰ Nell was there for Grandfather & I went there one Sunday. I afterward spent a brief holiday with them at Huntley Street—which runs parallel with Tottenham Ct Rd & Gower Street and we visited the British Museum & some of the Picture Galleries. Occasionally Nell came over to Paddington to see Mother.

Nell was almost as tall as your Father. She had dark hair & a rosy complexion & was a well spoken woman.¹¹

From Huntley Street they went to Duncan Terrace, Islington. It was there that I saw them together last and from what I remember it must have been from there that Nell went to Ventnor.¹²

As you will appreciate we all followed his literary work. Not only I but two or three of my chums so that we kept ourselves fully in touch with that side.

The Rooks. Clarence Rook of the Daily Chronicle kept your Father's work in the public eye by notices in the Press & Mrs Rook did a very faithful line drawing of him, head and shoulders.¹³

You know of course that for some period G. G. did articles for the Russian reviews. He first wrote them in German & then had them translated into Russian. I remember him remarking that at that time there was no Russian English dictionary.¹⁴

The last time I saw your Father was in Marylebone Road near Madame Tussaud's. I found out later he was then living in Nottingham Place close by.¹⁵

Towards the end we saw constant paragraphs about the state of his health & of his general condition. My Mother always said there was never any reason for him wanting a meal while she was alive. Those pars' grieved her intensely.

After that we saw less & less of your Father. He went to Italy & I wrote him when he was in Rome. An article of his in the old "Sunday Sun" "Christmas in Rome" I think came out. It must have been then that he got the material for "By the Ionian Sea."¹⁶

One Saturday morning some time after that I met him in Praed St. Station. He had been to see the Harrisons. I used to go out on Saturday morning collecting my Father's accounts. Your Father was not looking any too well then.

Only once after that do I remember him coming to ours. There was a blank much to my Mother's sorrow. She was always wondering where he was & how he was going on.

With 2 old friends I went one Sunday evening to Essex Hall to hear Clara Collet speak on George Gissing's Novels at the Ethical Society & there I saw & heard Morley Roberts & objected to the tone of his remarks. I can see him M. R. now in his close blue reefer jacket & his chubby brown beard & thick glasses. Miss Collet quite took the G. G. side I can assure you.¹⁷

I saw the announcement of his death on the morning after as I rode to work in the bus down Park Lane. That was the first we knew he was at S. Jean de Luz. Whatever gave rise to the talk that he was received into the Catholic Church?¹⁸

I must not end this without telling you of the days & walks I had as a boy with your Father in his early days in London. We walked out of the London of that day into the country. Down the Grand Junction Canal past Kensal Green then a village or to Horsenden & Twyford Abbey or across the fields to Hampstead & Highgate then quite rural.

And of days in winter in the centre of London, old London. There was a project then of bringing out Dickens illustrated in parts. I don't know if your father had a hand in it but only "Barnaby Rudge" eventuated. He & I walked over the ground & talked about it.¹⁹

I owe much of my knowledge of London to those walks & talks. Can you imagine Holborn with cobble stones & the shops with small panes with the glass blower blob in the centre? That was the Holborn we knew. And Clare Market that congeries of streets from Oxford St. to the Strand with Seven Dials. That's where Kingsway is now. Or old Westminster & the land beyond Lambeth to the Crystal Palace, Penge & Denmark Hill with fine houses & gardens.

On our return home there would be long chats with grandfather & much discussion on men & things.

These remain a precious memory.

You will realise from these hasty notes why my Mother & all of us never realised why your Father deserted us. Ours was just the home of an English craftsman where one is always welcome for we were East Anglians too & hospitality is typical of Suffolk.

But then "to know all is to forgive all."

Miss Whittington

Of Miss Whittington's ancestry I know nothing. Emily Waller—sister of Jane Hall Waller, Grandfather Robert's wife—was companion to Miss Whittington.

From all I have heard Miss Whittington & Miss Waller travelled a good deal and spent the intervals between at Grandfather Robert's house at Badingham. For a country house of the 1850s it was quite commodious. It is to-day a 3 dweller cottage.

I gather from what I have heard from my Mother & Grandfather that both the ladies were linguists for their travels gave them no inconvenience.²⁰ Miss Whittington was "quite at home" at Badingham and a great favourite with all the family for my mother & her sister Maria often took their meals with them and her attitude to them was quite motherly.

In every way Miss Whittington was a good friend. Hence her care for your Grandfather Thos. Waller Gissing.

I believe—but I speak with reserve—that Miss Whittington & Aunt Emily finally retired to South Wales and lived with or near the Crawshay Williams and if my memory doesn't trick me I think your Father & one of the Medleys of Wakefield called there after a walking tour in Wales. If Grandfather Robert ever heard from them after I cannot say.²¹

You ask about the parents & birthplace of Tobias Gissing.

As I write I have before [me] a family tree I prepared in 1890 when Grandfather Robert was alive & of good memory, but it does not give the birthplace of Tobias Gissing, but I think from all I learned as a boy when I used to spend my holidays with "Uncle" William Etridge and with him & Alice Judith Etridge visited many of the relatives, Foulshams & Gissings & also was shown the resting places of many of them, that Theberton or Westleton was his birthplace. That is where Grandfather Robert was born, Theberton. Tobias Gissing's wife Judith Foulsham (b. Mar 7/1780 died Aug 1/1840), her mother was a great dairy woman at a farm at Theberton which she held copyhold of the Manor. I have seen the small copyholder's stamp of the period among Alice Etridge's papers and also the Auctioneer's notice of sale when she gave up farming in the middle 40's of infamous story. My record does not show Tobias' Father. There was a relative at Eye in Suffolk with whom my Aunt Maria was apprenticed to the Draper's trade. I believe he was an uncle. Tobias Gissing was born Oct 19 1781 & died Aug 22 1852. I believe he was found dead on the beach at Dunwich.²²

Tobias Gissing's wife Judith Foulsham had a Grandmother Judith Wigg who died at the age of 102. We have her silver tea spoons with her initials J. W. on.²³

Grandfather Robert came to London in 1869 when I was quite a little boy. Grandmother Jane died in 1864 and Aunt Maria kept house for him in the intervening years. My mother was married at Badingham Church on S. Crispin's day 1866 & came to live in London. My Father's Uncle Peter Smith kept the Brickyard at Badingham then & his family did until about 1912.

Grandfather Robert lived at Badingham all his married life and I believe your Grandfather Thomas Waller Gissing was born there.²⁴

Jane Hall Waller Grandfather Robert's wife was a Halesworth woman and was I believe at Theberton Hall the seat of the Milner Gibsons at the time of her marriage.

On her mother's side she is connected with the Halls, the lawyers of Halesworth. They were all Quakers & both Halls & Wallers rest in the Quakers Meeting House Ground at Middleton not far from Westleton or Halesworth, for as you know Nonconformists were not permitted Meeting Houses in the average town.²⁵

Uncle William Etridge showed me most of these places as a boy. He was a builder²⁶ & did a lot of Church work in East Suffolk & I used to go with him when he visited the various works and we made calls on friends of the families & visited old churches. Hence my knowledge of these matters.

I think there is some probability in the story of Tobias Gissing's ancestors coming from Germany. I should say Flanders is more correct. They were probably wool staplers who came over in the 16 century for there is a village of Gissing in Norfolk²⁷ & also a village of Foulsham not far from Worstead & quite clearly both villages were originally weavers' home[s] as you would say if you saw the old buildings.

And as we can clearly trace both sides beyond the Speeham land days, it is very likely that the first home was somewhere in that direction.

I have not got Uncle John's book yet. Maybe that may help us.

You asked in your first letter about Paul Rahardt.

Paul William Andrew Rahardt married my Aunt Maria. He was a Berliner. His father was William Rahardt a wholesale grocer in the Fisherstrasse, Berlin. Paul, "Uncle Paul" we always called him was a high class marine engineer. One of the old school, who could not only make the engine but do all the needful draughtsmanship & working drawings.

He was leading man with Yarrow & Hadley at the Isle of Dogs on the Thames near Blackwall. Yarrow are now on the Clyde. They made some of the first light draught river steamers & Paul took 2 out to Mexico for them to Moldinado Brs, the Mexican timber exporters. He was there 2 years, Vera Cruz & Campeachy [Campeche].

What was Paul like? A little over the average height, squarely built, a rather bronzed complexion & somewhat bald and a little deaf due to the breaking of a great hammer in the works where he was apprenticed in Germany. He was a man of great capability but not of keen business instincts. Characteristic isn't it of inventors?

In his middle life he went in for invention. Those automatic lubricators served with cocoabutter were his idea. He made thousands of them at one time of his business but made nothing from them & filled up his time with repair work.

The German inflation wiped out the proceeds of property etc to which his son Claude & daughter Maude were entitled. Up to the war they had something every year from Berlin.

Both the son & daughter are alive to-day & married. Claude lives near my brothers in Paddington & his son Ernest had a fine school record but lack of means prevented Ernest proceeding to Cambridge. But he has a post with the Gas Light & Coke Co.

¹The first of these letters, dated 24 November 1878, reads : “12 Braden St / Paddington / London W / My dear Algernon / I now attempt an answer to yours of the *12 of May* I hope you will excuse the scrawl and grammatical errors. As my father was a posthumous child he could give me but a very poor account of his pedigree from personal knowledge but in the very early part of the 18th century my Father’s Grandfather came from Germany and settled in Suffolk as a Wool Factor at a town and Borough called Eye represented at this time by the Right Hon Viscount Barrington Vice Chamberlain to her Majesty the Queen. My Father’s Father brought two Sons with him from Germany my Grandfather being one and he being in partnership with his Brother and dying suddenly but very little of the property came to my part of the Family / At this time there are living in the Neighbourhood of Eye descendants of the other branch of the German Gissings and they are enjoying the fruits of the money my Father[’s] Family should have had they are Farmers, there is a Dr. Gissing living at Woodbridge in Suffolk. My Father’s Mother being left with a large Family the children had to do as well as they could. / One of my Father’s Brothers died in Lincolnshire when I was a boy another in India my Father was partly brought up by a maternal Aunt—who when she was 76 years sunk £100 in the Funds got 12s a Week for it and lived to be 96—12s a Week for 20 years—would not you Lawyers call that a good investment? / I shall write to ‘Willie’ [George and Algernon’s brother William] soon I hope your Mother sand Sisters are well please give my Love to them I saw George last Tuesday he was suffering from Tooth Ache poor Boy he suffers dreadfully from that worst of pains I have not seen him since his Birthday. As Monday will be *your* Birthday I wish you many Happy and Prosperous returns of it when I hope you will be enabled to decypher [sic] these Heiroglificks [sic], we are all well I am / Y^r affectionate / Grandfather / R F Gissing.”

The second letter, still more confused than the first, is dated 10 November 1879 from the same address: “My dear Algernon / Thanks for your Letter I saw your B^f George Sunday he told us you still suffered with bad Head Aches I am glad to say I have not that pain half an hour in the Year a good thing to[o] is it not? You seem desirous of learning more than I can tell you of the Gissings Mr Sam Gissing formerly of Eye Suffolk was an illegitimate Son of a Sister of my Father and when he (Sam) left Eye went to reside with a married Daughter somewhere in Gloucestershire but I have not his address but I think he could give you but little information of the Gissing Family for he was taken into the Family of a M^r Naylor Draper an intimate friend of Sam’s Father a D^r Ros[s] of Eye Sam learned the business of Draper and Silk Maker with Mr Naylor then he was taken in as Partner M^r N died left Sam Guardian to 3 Motherless Children he M^r N died worth 12 Thousand pounds

to be equally [sic] divided between Sam Gissing and his 3 Orphan Children and the Business to be carried on as Naylor & Gissing till the Youngest Child was 21 Y^{rs} Old. George tell[s] me he has furnished you with information about a Gissing Family of Norfolk but I fear I am only a *twig* of a *Low Branch* of that stock. Now to an ease for your Head ache. Take 2 Oz of Epsom Salts dissolve them in a pint an[d] half Bottle of Water when dissolved shake up well and before you dress in the Morning take a wine Glassful 3 Consecutive Mornings then miss 3 Mornings and so go on till you have taken the whole. / Do you rem[em]ber Mr Milner the prison Surgeon Miss Milner's Brother Your Aunt Ann say[s] she have heard him say this is the best thing any body can take I hope I shall hear you find relief from it I shall write to your Br W^m this week. Please give my kindest regards to Mother and Sisters hope they are all well believe me my dear Boy /Y^r affectionate / Grandfather / R F Gissing Of the Wallers next time I know but little / You need not be long before you write again

²Gissing sat for matriculation at London University in 1874.

³Chapter I in *Workers in the Dawn* (1880).

⁴Gissing's successive addresses can be found in his *Collected Letters*.

⁵Gissing did know the German anarchist personally through his friend Eduard Bertz, whom Johann Most (1846-1906) used to visit when he lived at Tottenham. Most was expelled from England to America in 1882.

⁶He gave his lecture on "Faith and Reason" at the Notting Hill Gate Progressive Club at 8 p.m. on 23 March 1879. The *National Reformer* announced the event in its number of the same day, p. 190.—Sir Charles Dilke (1843-1911) was an eminent Radical in those days, and Joseph Firth Bottomley Firth (1842-1889), a barrister who entered the House of Commons in 1880 and whose memory is associated with the reform of municipal government.

⁷Arthaud has not been identified.

⁸Bernard and Austin Harrison were the two eldest sons of Frederic Harrison (1831-1923). Bernard (1871-1956) became a painter, Austin (1873-1928) a journalist and writer. In the September 1906 number of *Nineteenth Century*, Austin devoted a long article to his former tutor.

⁹*A Life's Morning* was published in 1888. It was about *The Unclassed* and *Thyrza* that Gladstone wrote a few words in the May 1888 number of *Nineteenth Century*. Gladstone is also known to have read and praised *In the Year of Jubilee*.

¹⁰Gissing never lived in Robert Street. He lived in Huntley Street, first at no. 70, then at no. 35 in the first six months of 1879.

¹¹The notion of Nell being a well-spoken woman is contradicted by Gissing's words.

¹²Gissing never lived in Duncan Terrace. His Islington address was 5 Hanover Street for some time from December 1879. There is no mention of Nell's going to Ventnor in Gissing's correspondence and papers.

¹³Clarence Henry Rook (1862-1915) was a journalist who contributed to the *Globe*, a London evening paper, and to the *Daily Chronicle*. That Rook at some time reviewed Gissing's new books for the *Chronicle* is, to put it mildly, very doubtful. It is not known whether he ever met Gissing, but his wife Clare made a dated sketch of Gissing's head (8 June 1901) during his stay with the Wellses in the early summer of 1901. This sketch, which was first published in C. K. Shorter's weekly the *Sphere* (C. K. S., "Literary Letter," 9 January 1904, p. 48), has often been attributed to H. G. Wells because, together with Gissing, he signed it, hence the mistaken assertion of future commentators that this pencil drawing was Wells's work. The portrait was also reproduced in the successive editions of the Italian translation of *Born in Exile* (UTET, 1955).

¹⁴Gissing did write quarterly articles, in English not in German, for the Russian journal *Vyestnik Evropy* in 1881 and 1882. He did not contribute to any other Russian periodical.

¹⁵Gissing never lived in Nottingham Place.

¹⁶This is another paragraph which showed how unreliable Willie's memory could be. He means "Christmas on the Capitol," which Gissing wrote on his return from Italy in early 1889, and which appeared in the *Bolton Evening News* among other provincial papers in late December of the same year. The material for *By the Ionian Sea* was collected in 1897 during Gissing's third and last stay in Italy.

¹⁷Willie has in mind the well-known lecture given by Clara Collet at Essex Hall about which Gissing's younger sister had seen a report in the *Queen* for 5 March 1892, p. 395. The novelty of Willie's testimony lies in the presence of Morley Roberts among the audience and in Miss Collet's rebuttal of some of his views. But was it Morley Roberts? The lecture was given on 28 February, Gissing heard from Roberts on 1 March, yet it was only on 14 March that news of the lecture reached him through his sister, and Roberts does not seem to have referred to it in his next letter received on 16 March. Roberts appears without a beard and without glasses in portraits of him.

¹⁸The obituaries repeated Wells's error. Gissing died at Ispoure, near St. Jean-Pied-de-Port, and was buried in the St. Jean-de-Luz cemetery. "Catholic" merely echoes the rather pretentious religious phraseology. Willie apparently understood "catholic" as meaning "Roman catholic."

¹⁹Gissing did not contribute to that edition of Dickens's works.

²⁰This is surely an embellishment on Willie's part. It is far more likely that Miss Whittington and her companion Emily Waller knew a few foreign words and managed as best they could when abroad.

²¹Miss Whittington and her companion ultimately went to live at Ynystawe, near Swansea.—The only Medley known in the Gissing circle was William Medley, a Derby pharmaceutical chemist and a great friend of Thomas Waller Gissing, who celebrated their friendship in a sonnet to be found in *Margaret and Other Poems*. Whether they ever called together on T. W. Gissing's benefactress in Wales is unknown.

²²This paragraph contains both accurate information, confirmed by other sources, and unquestionable errors. Among these is the birthplace of Tobias, which was definitely Eye, though it is attested that there were Gissings at both Theberton and Westleton at the time, indeed all over Suffolk. Willie is wrong when he writes that his grandfather Robert Foulsham Gissing was born at Theberton: he was born at Westleton on 26 August 1805, and baptised on 1 September in the same village. Theberton is the village where he married Jane Hall Waller on 13 October 1828. As for Tobias Gissing's wife Judith she died not in 1840, but in 1841.

²³The teaspoons Willie refers to may have been owned by the grandmother of Tobias's wife, but all we know is that Judith Wigg, née Simpson, Judith Foulsham Gissing's grandmother, lived from c. 1727 to 1789, and her mother Judith Wigg, wife of Robert Foulsham, then of George Friston, lived from c. 1754 to 1848, neither of them to over 100. Judith Friston is listed under "Farmers" at Hinton (not Theberton) in the 1844 Suffolk Directory.

²⁴Thomas Waller Gissing was born at Halesworth on 2 August 1829 and baptised on 27 June 1830.

²⁵There may have been lawyers called Hall at Halesworth, Quaker relatives of Jane Hall Waller, but the Halls and Wallers on her side, at least her parents, grandparents and brothers

and sisters, were not Quakers. Birth, marriage and death registers show them as baptized, married and buried in the churches of their villages.

²⁶William Etridge is given in the 1881 census for Badingham, by which time he was 67, as “grocer and draper.” He may have been in the building trade in earlier days, but Willie having been born in 1868 cannot have had very many holidays in Suffolk before William Etridge turned grocer and draper.

²⁷Whether English or German, Tobias’s father remained unknown, and so did the place he came from. As for the village of Gissing in Norfolk it appears in the Domesday Book, and its name became a surname for hundreds of persons, mainly in Norfolk and Suffolk, originating from it through centuries.

Wisconsin Public Radio
University of the Air: Gissing Interview with M. D. Allen
On Sunday 6 June 2010

MDA: “I am the literary man of 1882. . . . I am learning my business. Literature nowadays is a trade. Putting aside men of genius, who may succeed by mere cosmic force, your successful man of letters is your skilled tradesman. He thinks first and foremost of the markets; when one kind of goods begins to go off slackly, he’s ready with something new and appetising. He knows perfectly all the possible sources of income.”

EA: Those are the comments of a character in the novel *New Grub Street* by George Gissing, a man our guest describes as the greatest Victorian novelist you’ve never heard of. I’m Emily Auerbach.

NG: I’m Norman Gilliland. This is University of the Air.

EA: Born in 1857 in England, George Gissing became, along with Thomas Hardy and George Meredith, one of the leading novelists of late Victorian England. Gissing wrote over twenty novels, over a hundred short stories, and a study of Charles Dickens that is still highly regarded more than a century later. What are we missing if we overlook Gissing? Joining us to explore the scandalous life and prolific work of George Gissing is Malcolm Allen, Professor of English at UW Fox Valley, who’s currently working on a book entitled *Gissing and [France]*.

NG: Well, it’s a pleasure to have the world’s tallest George Gissing expert with us today. Welcome.

MDA: That will come across on radio with it, won’t it? Thank you.
[Laughter]

NG: A tall order, I know, to fill the bill. You know there are certain figures in the arts, in particular, who run across this phenomenon. In music it would be Johann Nepomuk Hummel, in journalism it would be Richard Harding Davis. People very famous, and justifiably so, in their own time. And yet they just fall off the map for years, if not forever. Why so, with George Gissing?

MDA: I'm not sure that Gissing was very famous in his own time. He did eventually win a rank; he was one of the three best known, but he never attained anything like the fame of Dickens, for example. And even in his own lifetime he was a little bit of a minority taste. What happened to Gissing after his death in 1903 is what happens to a lot of writers. There was a sort of backlash against him. The little fame he had won dissipated, and for half a century or so, it was very difficult to get his books. He never, I think, became more famous in his own lifetime, because of the nature of his writing. He's rather a pessimistic writer, rather a grim writer. People, even intelligent people, tend to like happy writings. And I'm trying to think of a Gissing novel with a happy ending, and I'm not succeeding. [Laughter]

NG: Out of twenty-three.

MDA: Twenty-two, it depends how you define "novel," yes. [Laughter]

EA: And why are you drawn to Gissing? Before we get into his life, and he has a very interesting life, including some sort of unfortunate marriage choices, and so on, but before we get into his life, tell us what draws you to George Gissing. Why do you think he's worth spending time with?

MDA: Well, I'm drawn to Gissing because I feel, I hope this doesn't sound absurd, a sort of personal affinity with the man. I think that if we do have a favorite writer, then often the attraction is, I won't say irrational, but it's non-rational. And when I read Gissing's novels and Gissing's letters, I sort of feel this is somebody I would get along well with if I were to meet him. Now that's why I started reading Gissing.

NG: You like pessimistic people? You get along well with people who have unhappy endings in mind? [Laughter]

MDA: I have been accused of being pessimistic myself, so there does seem to be a link there. [Laughter]

EA: A fellow Englishman, from a similar area?

MDA: Well, we were born in the same town, actually. We were both born in [Wakefield.] In my case, that was purely by chance. That was the nearest maternity hospital, and I spent, I think, three or four days there before going back to my hometown twelve miles away. But Gissing lived there for the first, I think, fourteen years of his life. So, yes, from the same part of the world, and, more or less, from the same social background.

NG: And did that location affect his writing?

MDA: Not really. Gissing wrote about his hometown of Wakefield in one novel only. And it was London that attracted him, and most of his novels have London as their focus.

EA: What sort of class did he come out of? What do we know about his family life?

MDA: He was the first child of a chemist, in British English. A pharmacist. So, lower middle class. His father was an intelligent man; he was a reader; he was a sort of a poet, an amateur botanist. His father was active in local politics and encouraged the scholarly aspirations of his son, so, in financial terms, pretty modest, but there was an intellectual life in the house.

EA: And the schooling, then, that George Gissing obtained?

MDA: He went to local schools, and eventually moved on to a school in Cheshire, from which he won a scholarship to the precursor of the University of Manchester, which was then called Owens College, and he did brilliantly well at Owens College. And it seemed that he was marked out for a life as an Oxford or Cambridge don.

NG: There are two aspects to most people; there's the intellectual, and then there's the emotional.

MDA: Yes, in the case of Gissing, the emotional kicked in; the hormones kicked in. He fell in love with a young woman who was in the process of becoming an alcoholic. And when she didn't have money, she would sell herself, including sell herself to Gissing's friends. Gissing did what he could to keep her off the streets; he gave her what money he could. Eventually, he ran out, so he started robbing his fellow students. People started noticing that money, and clothes, and books were going missing. Marked money was placed in the pocket of a coat. A detective hid in the cloakroom. Gissing was caught in the act.

NG: That was the end of his academic career?

MDA: He was sentenced to one month's imprisonment, with hard labor. And the day after that, he was expelled from Owens College.

NG: And what was his family's response to that?

MDA: We don't know. We can only surmise. By then his father had died, and every contemporary record of the Gissings about this event has been destroyed. There is not a single word about it in any of Gissing's letters.

NG: How Victorian.

MDA: Indeed, or any of the letters of his sisters, his mother, and his brothers to him. It is Victorian. And the Gissings had a very late-Victorian, lower middle-class, sense of respectability. And George had done this terrible thing. He'd robbed to help a prostitute, with whom he was obviously having an affair.

EA: I would think that time in prison and this scandal would stay with him and come up in his fiction in various ways, just the way for Dickens his family's imprisonment in the debtors' prison was something that he kept returning to as a theme.

MDA: I think he never recovered from it. I think it was always present with him. When he met a new person, Gissing, I think, would be wondering, "Does this person know of my shame?" Eventually, Gissing did make progress in the field of literature, and began to meet eminent men, and women. And I think he'd always be wondering if they knew.

NG: Did they?

MDA: There was gossip, and many people would have known, yes, but not everybody. Gissing had no way of knowing if this particular person would have known. And not mentioning it, of course, would be sort of as embarrassing to Gissing as mentioning it, which presumably never happened.

NG: Damned if he did, and damned if he didn't. What about his relationship with the woman in question?

MDA: Well, Gissing went to the U.S. for a year or so, after he got out of prison.

NG: So it would have been what? About 1876 by now?

MDA: Eighteen seventy-six, indeed. And we know that he wrote letters to her; Nell, she was called. Marian Helen Harrison. The letters have not

survived. When Gissing got back to England, he went to London; he sought out Nell, and lived with her. And eventually, he married her in 1879.

EA: And how did that work?

MDA: Not very well. She was now even more of an alcoholic than she had been. She caused disturbances in the lodging houses in which she and Gissing lived. There's a scene in Gissing's first novel in which the Gissing character is ejected from a lodging house, because of the behaviour of his wife. And that must be autobiographical. Eventually they separated, and Gissing paid her a modest sum to stay away.

NG: So we can almost see, on the face of it that his literary career begins with that, if you want to call it, misstep, in which he allowed his whole career to be sidetracked by his relationship with this woman. Did he write before that? Do we have any notion of literary talent before this trauma?

MDA: We do not, no. His first piece of literature, of writing, that I'm aware of, apart from a few childish letters, dates from his days in Boston, when he first arrived in the U.S. When he got to Chicago, he found himself without money, and he wrote stories anonymously for Chicago newspapers, including the *Chicago Tribune*, and kept himself alive by that means. Some scholars have spent their time in the back files of Chicago newspapers, trying to decide if this particular story is one of Gissing's, or if that one is. And there is a sort of accepted corpus of stories that we are sure are his, and then there are one or two that Gissing scholars politely argue about.

EA: And after his first marriage ended in this separation, paid separation and so on, what did he then do in terms of his relationships with women?

MDA: One biographer suggests that occasionally he must have had women to live with him, even if only for a short time. That cannot be proved, and there is absolutely no trace of that in any contemporary documents. There are traces of him having occasional crushes on women, falling in love, briefly, with various women. We know that he suffered considerably from sexual frustration after separating from his first wife.

NG: We know this how?

MDA: We know this because of a certain coded language in his diary; he talks about being lonely . . . lonely, lonely, lonely, can't do anything. He's like that. And, that seems, that plausibly seems to me, that he's, well, bothered by—

NG: What else do we learn from his diary at this point? This is the first I've heard mention of a diary. Where does that start?

MDA: Well, he kept the diary for some years. He destroyed the early years of it later, the years of his marriage with Nell, which is a great tragedy, of course, for later biographers. Even so, I think it starts in 1887, and it goes on pretty consistently until his death in 1903. Now, most of his diary is not a great read. He tends to note consistently two things: the weather and the number of pages he wrote. [Laughter] So, the typical Gissing entry is something like, "Foggy in the morning; sun came out in the afternoon. Wrote two pages." However, the longest entry, I would guess it's the longest entry, certainly one of them, describes his seeing the body of his first wife. He was spending some days on the South Coast. He got a telegram which said, "Mrs. Gissing dying; come at once." He went, saw her body, and wrote a lengthy diary entry about his feelings.

NG: And, what was his relationship with her at that point? Was there a rapprochement of some kind on her deathbed?

MDA: He says that he had not seen her for some years. They had been completely separated. And I actually have the diary extract with me, and I think that it might be interesting to read. O.K., so he's been told that his wife is dead in London, and he was on holiday with a man named Roberts, a life-long friend.

(Reads from Gissing's diary, 1 March, 1888. Pierre Coustillas, ed., *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1978, pp. 22-23.)

NG: Now, there's a really distinct literary style there. Short sentences, matter of fact description of a tawdry scene, those white teeth stand out for some reason, of being the only thing that are still intact in this situation. And then his final line there about, "This is the sort of social injustice or social ill that I should address." Do all of those components come out when he writes fiction?

MDA: Well, they come out in his next novel. His next novel is called *The Nether World*, published in 1889. It is the last of his working-class novels, and most people say it's the best. And it was inspired by, in part, inspired by his feelings as he saw the body of Nell. But after *The Nether World* then he tends not to write about the working class, and the rest of his novels are middle class; they have a middle class background. So the last few lines of

this letter show strong feeling, and the strong feeling did come out in the next novel, but he did not bear testimony for the rest of his life.

EA: He made a bad second marriage, is that right?

MDA: He did, indeed. The story is that he was so tormented by frustration that he ran out into the street and spoke to the first women he met. That's one story. Another story is that he met her at a music hall. But he met a woman called Edith Underwood. Eventually, he proposed marriage to her, and was accepted. Apparently, not with any great enthusiasm, but he was accepted. Edith Underwood seemed to be meek when Gissing met her, and he thought he could get along with her. She was working class; she was probably the daughter of a stonemason. Gissing knew there could be no intellectual companionship, but he thought they could get along. He was mistaken. She became very bad-tempered. She became grossly insulting. She threw things around the place. Eventually, Gissing left her after half a dozen years of marriage. And, in fact, I think in 1902, the second Mrs. Gissing was institutionalised. And she died in an institution in 1917, about fourteen years after the death of Gissing.

NG: Do you think there is something in the personality of George Gissing that made him attracted to these sorts of hardship cases? I mean, we have an alcoholic, and then we have a woman who was mentally ill.

MDA: I think there has to be. Once, especially when you're young, and overwhelmed by the hormones, once, you can make a mistake. But to make two mistakes suggests sort of a taste, and some biographers have suggested that he needed this sort of tension. He needed to be, to make himself miserable, in a sense, in order to create.

NG: It's a common notion, isn't it, about writers or artists in general that they can't create unless they're miserable?

MDA: Indeed.

EA: And did the lung disease that would eventually take his life, did that start becoming a problem for him early on?

MDA: It became a problem over the last decade of his life or so. And as a sign of the pessimism of Gissing, he records somewhere that he never coughs into his handkerchief, this was before the lung disease, without looking for blood. And he said, "I never expect to live more than a year." And this was a completely sincere comment.

NG: Well, sincere it may be, but it's also a part of a great tradition of the consumptive artist going back, Keats and well before, I'm sure. We'll look at the emerging career of George Gissing when we return in a moment. This is University of the Air.

MDA: This is a short extract from *The Nether World*, describing a bank holiday, a public holiday, in London, among the working class.

(Reads extract from Chapter 12 of *The Nether World*)

EA: That's a passage from *The Nether World*, an early novel by Victorian novelist George Gissing. I'm Emily Auerbach back with Norman Gilliland and we're talking to Malcolm Allen about what he calls one of the greatest Victorian novelists you've never heard of, George Gissing. This passage from *The Nether World* shows him again giving a very concrete detailed description of, sort of, lower social orders. What would his purpose have been in a novel like *The Nether World*? What was he hoping to accomplish?

MDA: He was hoping to write a work of art. I don't think that he was hoping to change things in the way that Dickens hoped to change things. He thought that things could not be changed. He thought that the working class were literally hopeless, and he thought the human condition was hopeless. So his aim is to tell the truth, and to do so in a way that will stand the test of time.

NG: He actually almost reminds me more of, say, a Dostoyevsky than a Dickens.

MDA: Yes, yes. There's the same seriousness.

NG: The description of, you know, the squalor of the lower classes, without any ending on a major chord.

MDA: Indeed.

EA: Well, what did Gissing think of Dickens? What did he think of something like *A Christmas Tale* and the 'God bless us all' kind of ending where Ebenezer Scrooge decides to, you know, get a turkey and be a better employer and so on?

MDA: Gissing greatly admired Dickens, and wrote a very appreciative study of him. However, Gissing thought that Dickens pampered his au-

dience. He thought that he betrayed his art, in a sense, by producing pictures of life that were false. Now, Gissing understood, Gissing claimed, perhaps I should say, that Dickens thought a novel was meant to be entertaining. And that a pessimistic novel would be a contradiction in terms. So Gissing greatly appreciated and admired Dickens without wanting to imitate his mood or his attitudes to social questions.

EA: What about wanting to imitate his fortune and fame? I mean, Dickens made money from novels like *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield* and others, and was greatly beloved. Gissing, I gather, did not make a whole lot of money from his books.

We remind our readers that the next International Gissing Conference will be held at the University of York in March, from Monday 28 to Wednesday 30.

For further information please contact Nicky Losseff,

nl5@york.ac.uk

MDA: Gissing, at first, was very poor. And, even until the end, he was relatively poor. Certainly, relatively poor for a man who had achieved so much. Of course, I think he would've liked to have been rich, but he was very dogged. He realized why people didn't read his books, or why not very many, and he would not compromise. He wrote what he thought he should write. In that way, he had great integrity.

NG: It was intriguing, one difference between Dickens and Gissing seems to be, or another one, seems to be in the use of words. Dickens had such an almost Shakespearean bent with specific words, even to the point of injecting them into names of characters, even with like somebody named Scrooge, what that character was supposed to be like. Or is Gissing— From what I've read of him, the language is very transparent, very workaday vocabulary.

MDA: Not always, I think. I think Gissing does have a very extensive vocabulary. And he certainly sends me to the dictionary from time to time.

I didn't know the word "titubate" until Gissing used it. It means to stagger. And that, in fact, is an example of Gissing's rather Latinate, formal vocabulary.

NG: Which is a sort of different kind of vocabulary from what I think is the more English Dickensian, again more of the Shakespearean tradition of "Take this wonderful English word and give it a twist."

MDA: Yep. Gissing was a scholar, and that does sometimes come out in his vocabulary.

EA: We opened with a passage from *New Grub Street*, considered by many to be his masterpiece. But the character at that point was saying literature nowadays is a trade, and seemed to be very aware of the fact that you had to almost play games if you were going to make money in the field of literature. Was Gissing bitter?

MDA: Sometimes, I think he was bitter. Towards the end of his life, he did have a sort of a success, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. There is a comment in one of the letters complaining, and "bitterly" is the only word you can use, about how little in fact this success brought him. So, yes, he would have liked to have done much better financially. But, as I say, he was utterly committed to telling the truth as he saw it.

EA: Why is *New Grub Street* considered his masterpiece? What can you tell us about that novel?

MDA: Most of Gissing's novels have some sort of a flaw. I think, perhaps, that *New Grub Street* is the occasion when he absolutely got it right. The book is of a piece from beginning to end. It was written quite quickly. It was written in a spirit of what I think we can honestly call inspiration. And it tells the unromantic truth about the commercialization of literature in London, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

NG: Was that his most generally popular book before the very last one, perhaps? I mean, were people that interested in the commercialization of literature?

MDA: I don't think it was popular, in any meaningful sense of the word. [Laughter] Gissing had a number of *succès d'estime*, but never a financial hit.

EA: Are there passages from it that you can share that would give us a sense of his voice in it?

MDA: I think so. This is a novel about novelists. It's not the only such thing, obviously, even in English literature. We forget, perhaps, that even David Copperfield becomes a successful novelist. But there is very little, indeed, in *David Copperfield* about arguing with publishers, trying to get paid. [Laughter]

NG: There's kind of an irony in this whole thing, isn't there? [Laughter]

MDA: Indeed. Having to put up with spiteful reviews. *New Grub Street* deals with that sort of thing. There are two central characters. One is called Edwin Reardon, and he is the idealist, the man who writes as well as he can, which is not actually very well, but he does write as well as he can. And he thinks it's a sin to make an art into a trade. The contrasting figure is a man called Milvain, Jasper Milvain. Some people think that "Milvain" suggests 'villain,' although personally he's an amiable enough guy. And Jasper Milvain sets out explicitly to do well in literature, which he considers a trade. There's one rather long speech of his, which perhaps gives a sense of his personality, and a sense of Gissing's idea of the sort of man who succeeds in the London of his day, the literary London. Jasper is saying:

(Reads excerpt from Chapter 33 of *New Grub Street*. Ed. John Goode. Oxford and New York: OUP, 1993, p. 456.)

NG: How did George Gissing stand regarding the sort of literary trend of naturalism at this time? It almost sounds like he's speaking in Darwinian terms, but applying it to the literary market.

MDA: Gissing is perhaps the most notable exponent of naturalism in the English novel. And, there is indeed, an explicit Darwinian reference in the passage I just read. References to the "survival of the fittest" occur in other of his novels. Gissing was a great, O.K., a qualified, but great admirer of the French naturalists, including Zola. And I think that Zola had a certain influence on Gissing.

EA: And, when you use the word "naturalism," how would you describe that in terms of literature?

MDA: A shorthand way of describing it would be "heredity plus environment equals fate." We have very little freedom of will, according to the naturalists. We have far less than what we like to think we have. Our freedom of manoeuvre is truncated, it is limited. And it's limited by the genes we inherit, from our parents, our grandparents. It's limited by the environment in which we grow up.

NG: So what does Gissing have to say about, you know, moral choice in that context?

MDA: Well, perhaps the second greatest novel of Gissing is called *Born in Exile*. And in the course of that novel, an atheist, deliberately becomes, or tries to become a clergyman because the lifestyle associated with that pleases him, and he would be able to marry the sort of woman he actually wants to marry.

NG: That's a very traditional idea, though, you know, for people to go into the clergy for really social reasons.

MDA: O.K., that did happen, certainly, but such men would not probably have very strong atheist convictions to struggle against. Now, Godwin Peak, the central character in *Born in Exile*, does. And he justifies himself by saying, "What is the truth? The truth is indeterminable; we don't know. If I become a clergyman then I'm going to preach Christianity, and that will have a beneficial effect upon my flock. It will stop them, or help them stop doing bad things, and it will help preserve social order."

NG: So who cares if there's a God or not?

MDA: He thinks, Godwin Peak thinks, as did Gissing, there is no God.

EA: And in other novels, when he's writing about women, like in the novel *The Odd Women*, what did Gissing think of the growing clamour for women's rights and for, sort of, an emancipated woman that was swirling around his time?

MDA: He was ambiguous about it. On the one hand, he thought that quite a lot of marital misery was due to the fact that women were not educated, and he thought really there's no chance of significant social improvement at all, until women are educated. So the two feminist main characters in *The Odd Women* are treated with respect. Having said that, a later novel by Gissing, *The Whirlpool*, 1897, posits, or seems to posit, as the ideal woman a certain Mrs. Morton. The great thing about Mrs. Morton is that she stays at home, and looks after her children, and teaches them, and supervises the servants. And, Gissing seems to approve entirely of this, without equivocation.

NG: Well, she is more well to do, I gather?

MDA: Not really. She would be, Mrs. Morton would be, middle-middle-class.

NG: So regardless of one's station, there's room just for staying at home regardless of education?

MDA: I think perhaps Gissing approved of intellectual women from the neck up, but I think, perhaps, his heart responded more to women who observed traditional roles.

NG: Well, we've certainly seen that his heart responded to women who were not educated, and I gather that was something of a handicap for him as an author, because he certainly wasn't going to get much support at home.

MDA: Well, quite the contrary. Both wives were constant problems. The first wife fell down drunk while Gissing was trying to write. The second wife threw things at him, while he was trying to write.

EA: Was there any poetry in George Gissing? In other words, do you find passages as you read his twenty-two or -three novels, and all those short stories, do you find passages where you just feel the way you do, say, with a Charlotte Brontë novel, where she's describing the beauty of the night sky or the heath, do you feel poetry there, do you find that in George Gissing?

MDA: Generally speaking, no. Generally speaking, I think his style is rather muted, subfusc. There are paragraphs describing the English countryside, in particular, which obviously aspire to a verbal music. I find them a little bit self-conscious, and not entirely successful.

EA: So what are some of the favorite passages you would have in a Gissing novel? Let's say you're talking to someone who's never heard of Gissing before, and they say, "I don't have much time; I'm not going to read a whole novel, but just read me a passage or two; show me what Gissing's voice is like." Are there passages that you would point to?

MDA: One that immediately springs to mind is a passage from his very first novel, which in some ways is a very bad book; it was amateur work, published when he was twenty-three.

NG: It was self-published, was it, huh?

MDA: It was, indeed. Gissing paid for it to be published. He inherited a few hundred pounds and paid for *Workers in the Dawn* to be published after it had been rejected by a number of traditional publishers. Now the passage I'm thinking of describes Christmas in working-class London, the lower levels of the working-class. And you mentioned *A Christmas Carol* a

little while ago. There's also the famous scene in *Pickwick Papers* in Dingly Dell, the celebration of Christmas. The passage I'm thinking of in *Workers in the Dawn* seems to be a sort of anti-Dickens, the squalor, the drunkenness, the sloth, the fighting.

NG: It is still a Christmas scene, though?

MDA: It is still a Christmas scene.

EA: Well, let's hear it.

MDA: O.K., this is from Chapter 28 of *Workers in the Dawn*.

(Reads excerpt: Ed. Debbie Harrison. London: Victorian Secrets, 2010, p. 328. Pierre Coustillas, ed., Brighton: Harvester Press, 1985, vol. 2, pp. 69-70.)

MDA: And Gissing then goes on to say how Mrs. Pettindund went off to a loan office, and got yet more money, all of which is meant for the buying of food and alcohol, and there is no spiritual dimension whatsoever to the Christmas described.

NG: So, Gissing was not a big proponent of, I'll call them 'the poor', in terms of if only they were given a chance, they would pull themselves up. He's saying this is ingrained in their character, not to save, to spend, to indulge.

MDA: Yes. He seems to think there is no real possibility of improvement. And the phrase I would use for some of Gissing's descriptions of the poor is "fascinated loathing." He seems to regard them with fascination, but with a visceral dislike.

EA: Very complicated man, George Gissing, and we're going to look more at his life, and his work when we continue in a moment with University of the Air.

(Returns with MDA reading excerpt from *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. Ed. Mark Storey. Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1987, p. 12, "Spring I.")

NG: Novelist George Gissing in his next to last completed book, the name of which is *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* from 1903 expressing a dilemma probably shared by a lot of artists, and that is fame in my own time, and selling myself, or should I go with that which is inspired and hope that future generations will discover and appreciate me? I'm Norman Gilliland back with Emily Auerbach and our guest Malcolm Allen. And

we're looking at the career, the wayward career you might say, of this Victorian novelist George Gissing. This does seem to express almost a lifetime dilemma for Gissing. Which direction do you think he took?

MDA: There is no doubt that he wrote the best he could, what he thought he should write, and, although he regretted the consequences, he remained true to what he saw as artistic truth.

NG: I'm kind of reminded, you'll forgive the comparison, but it's the one that comes to mind, of something that another Englishman John Cleese said about his art, and that was—yes it's wonderful and all that, but frankly I would rather just have been a really successful mediocrity playing to the masses and getting paid. Was that really the conclusion that Gissing came to also?

MDA: That's a very human response, isn't it? And we can all identify with it. I don't think Gissing would have wanted to be a mediocrity. He knew that he wasn't, and he refused to betray his vocation.

EA: Did he think he was on the same level, though, as a Dickens, a Thackeray, a George Eliot, the Brontë sisters, Jane Austen?

NG: Or, are they all on the same level for that matter? [Laughter]

EA: But, did he think that he was a great, one of the greatest, novelists of all time?

MDA: I don't think he did. As a very young man, he said, "I want a position in the army of novelists. Whether that's as a general, or a private soldier. I don't know." But I don't think he did have delusions of artistic grandeur.

EA: I've noticed that *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* is shorter than a lot of the other novels you've brought in. Is that why it became a sort of a cult success; is that simply because it wasn't of the same bulk?

MDA: I don't think so. I think it became a cult success because it's actually a pleasure to read. It's a very gentle book, a meditative book, perhaps a rather escapist book. It's a series of little articles about certain books or authors that Gissing admired, about the English countryside, about English food, about growing democracy in England, which Ryecroft and Gissing both had reservations about. But it is a pleasant read, the sort of thing you could read before going to bed, for example. The last ten minutes of the day. In that sense, it's not grim, and it's not challenging.

NG: So, in a sense, he's almost ending on a, for him, for Gissing, on a rather high note? [Laughter]

MDA: It's not quite the end, but yes, yes, or at least a mellow note.

EA: Is there a passage from it that you'd like to share from later in the book?

MDA: I think I could find one, easily, yes. One of these subjects of Ryecroft is the pleasure of reading. And V. S. Pritchett said that in this book, Gissing identifies something permanent in the mood or the personality of the bookish. And, there are five or six of these short extracts that deal exactly with reading.

(Reads excerpt. Ed. Mark Storey. Oxford and New York, 1987, p. 37, "Spring XVII.")

NG: It doesn't sound like he'd be a great fan of the Kindle, does it? [Laughter] He so thinks of a book as a physical thing that you can hear and smell.

MDA: Yes. Perhaps, eventually, who knows, the Kindle will acquire a sort of aura. [Laughter] But, yes, it hasn't yet, and I cannot imagine George Robert Gissing enthusing over a Kindle.

EA: With regard to Gissing's influence on other writers after his early death, when he was in his forties? Is that correct?

MDA: Forty-seven.

EA: Yeah. Orwell liked Gissing. Do you think Orwell was attracted to the truthfulness of his writing?

MDA: I think Orwell was attracted to the rather grim mood of quite a lot of Gissing, the man who wrote *1984*, after all certainly had a taste for unpleasant truth telling. I think that's one thing. The other thing, I think, is social background. Some of Orwell's novels deal with the lower, the middle, the lower levels of London. It's been suggested that *Keep The Aspistris Flying* was explicitly influenced by Gissing.

NG: I almost think that Gissing missed the boat; he should have been a journalist.

MDA: He did write a few articles, early in his career, for a Russian periodical. And he disliked it. He refused future offers of journalistic work.

He thought that it was, well, taking time and attention away from what he wanted to do.

NG: Even more tradesman-like than being a novelist.

MDA: Indeed. And journalists, or some journalists, in *New Grub Street* do not come across well.

EA: What writers did he like? I mean, he's writing in such a period of artistic accomplishment, all kinds of figures, whether it's Oscar Wilde or Edith Wharton, over across the Atlantic, Thomas Hardy, George Meredith. What did he think of the different people around him?

MDA: He pretty much read everything that came out. He read best sellers to try to work out why on earth they were best sellers. He read the books of his fellow novelists. He knew Thomas Hardy. He knew George Meredith. He knew H.G. Wells. He was omnivorous in his reading, but if you were to ask, "Who were his favorite authors?" I think you'd have to name the great names in Greek, in Latin, and in English and French, as well. And he would say Shakespeare, he would say Milton, he would say Sophocles, he would say Molière, and Balzac.

NG: So were people still reading Gissing in 1914, and 1924, and 1934 when there were certainly plenty of hard truths to report?

MDA: Not to any great extent. George Orwell complains that he could not find some of Gissing's novels. And the ones that we can now find quite easily Orwell never read. He couldn't get hold of them. He said that he could not, he never possessed a copy of *New Grub Street*; he had to borrow it from the library. So, until the beginning of the 1960s, Gissing was regarded as a very minor Victorian novelist who had achieved very modest success, only one really successful novel. He was regarded as a sort of Victorian fuddy-duddy. "We don't need to bother with him."

EA: And if you had to recommend starting with a Gissing novel, would it be *New Grub Street*, would it be *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, or what would you recommend starting with?

MDA: It would depend, perhaps, on the person asking for the recommendation. But, generally speaking, I would recommend *New Grub Street*, which is universally acknowledged as his best novel. If the person asking for a recommendation were interested in women's issues, then I'd recom-

mend *The Odd Women*. These perhaps are the two novels most widely read today, and most widely taught in universities.

NG: Malcolm Allen has been our guest this hour filling us in on a gap that many of us have in our knowledge that needs filling, and that would be Victorian novelist George Gissing, who, to his way of thinking, told it the way it was. Thanks for telling us the way it is.

MDA: Thank you. My pleasure.

NG: I'm Norman Gilliland with Emily Auerbach, and I hope you can join us for the next hour of University of the Air.

Book Review

George Gissing, *Isabel Clarendon*, ed. with an introduction and notes by Pierre Coustillas, Grayswood, Surrey: Grayswood Press, 2010. Pp. xxxvii + 331.

It is good to have a new, annotated edition of *Isabel Clarendon*, which has long been one of the scarcest works in Gissing's oeuvre. Originally published in two volumes in 1886, it was not reissued until 1969, when Pierre Coustillas edited the Harvester Press edition – the first Gissing title to appear in that distinguished series. The text of the Harvester edition was a photo-reprint of the original two-volume edition, accompanied by a critical introduction, notes and other apparatus. For this new edition the text has been reset and the book appears in a visually attractive single volume. An atmospheric jacket illustration (Benjamin Leader's painting *February Fill Dyke*) is supplemented, within the covers, by an 1884 photograph of Gissing and a facsimile of the first manuscript page of the novel. The editorial material has been extensively revised by Coustillas, who has taken the opportunity to update all references. In 1969, for example, most of Gissing's correspondence was still unpublished; here, quotations from his letters are referenced to the Ohio University Press edition of the collected correspondence.

The Harvester edition was itself a thoroughly scholarly enterprise, which means that much of the editorial commentary has survived into the present edition. However, a careful comparison of the two reveals innumerable small alterations as well as excisions and additions. Among the latter are two new appendices, the first reprinting Gissing's article "The Place of

Realism in Fiction,” the second reprinting ten reviews of the first edition of 1886 (one of which, from the *London Figaro*, had not been traced by Coustillas in 1969). Other additions occur in the *Notes* on the text. Although most of the notes are identical with those in the Harvester edition, Coustillas has added cross-references to Gissing’s letters and other writings, as well as freshly identifying allusions to Shakespeare, Milton, Blake and Wordsworth. Figures in Greek mythology are also explained, as are possible Biblical echoes. Altogether, the expanded notes offer near-comprehensive assistance to the reader. It is almost impossible to find passages that require but do not receive annotation. Perhaps one might consider the ending of Vol. 1, Ch. 4: “At this moment Isabel was sitting alone and thinking of him, sitting amid the graceful luxury of her refined home. Was *that* a dream of joy, or *this* a hideous vision?” (p. 194). Some readers might discern an echo here of the famous ending of Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale”: “Was it a vision, or a waking dream? / Fled is that music: – do I wake or sleep?” But the echo is perhaps not close enough to warrant a textual note.

In one case a quotation has been tracked down that eluded the editor forty years earlier. It is from Gissing’s beloved Landor: “Beyond the arrows, shouts, and views of men.” Where the Harvester note stated helplessly, “I have been unable to trace this quotation,” the Grayswood note triumphantly pinpoints its location in the 1831 edition of Landor’s *Count Julian, A Domestic Tragedy*. Unfortunately, where the quotation occurs in the novel (p. 242) the footnote indicator (31) is missing – so readers might assume that no further information is available in the notes.

As with the textual notes, the critical introduction substantially follows the earlier edition but also adds and removes material. In general the new introduction concentrates more on the novel itself and draws fewer parallels with Gissing’s other fiction: an understandable strategy, given the greater availability of his books in the intervening period. Occasionally, interpretative material has been dropped that might have aided readers new to the novel – for example, the section on the premonitory signs of Ada and Kingcote’s growing attraction – but again, given the enormous expansion of critical commentary in recent years, such excisions are understandable. As in the earlier edition, the introduction provides us with careful accounts of the novel’s genesis, its biographical substratum, its characterisation and narrative structure, and its debts to earlier writers. Certain passages (for example, on Gissing’s interest in German culture) are new, but in the main, despite numerous minor alterations, the essential approach is the same.

There is, however, a change of tone. Overall, critical judgments have become more forthright. This applies to characters in the novel – for example, Robert Asquith, here identified as a “fat-walleted bachelor” (p. xxx) who is not “a cultured individual worthy of the reader’s consideration” (p. xxv). “The urbane Earl of Winterset” of the earlier introduction has become “The urbane, mealy-mouthed Earl of Winterset” (p. xxix). Where the earlier version states: “Mrs. Bolt, the redoubtable landlady, makes us think of Dickens,” the updated version reads: “Mrs. Bolt, the vulgar, grasping and deceitful landlady, is a detestable human type that Gissing had seen at its most flourishing in Dickens” (p. xxv). Animadversions on critical commentators have also become more pronounced. Appraisals of modern critics, for example, are outspoken, most surprisingly in the case of Jacob Korg, here critiqued with some severity (p. xxix). So too are assessments of the novel’s first reviewers. Whereas in the *Harvester* edition these were understandably indicted for their “narrow-mindedness concerning the art of fiction,” here the charge-sheet is supplemented with phrases such as “deficient culture,” “careless reading” and “superior airs from persons whose incompetence was painfully obvious” (p. xx).

One would not, of course, wish to endorse the first reviews – though conceivably one might relish the splendid obtuseness of, say, the writer in the *Saturday Review* who mocked Gissing’s “scorn of barbarians who have the healthy tastes of Englishmen for fighting and bodily exercise” or sneered that the story was “of the thinnest possible kind, almost thin enough to satisfy Mr Henry James or Mr Thomas Hardy”. In the main, though, given their unfamiliarity with the kind of fiction Gissing was attempting, the reviews that are helpfully reprinted in this edition reveal a good deal of appreciation for qualities that critics still admire – the author’s originality, his psychological acumen and his skilful handling of dialogue. True, some of these first reviewers took a hostile view of the novel’s chief protagonist, Kingcote, calling him a “miserable, invertebrate creature” (the *Graphic*) or “a dreaming, morbid book-hunter [...] ‘a feckless loon’” (the *Spectator*). But similar strictures can readily be found in the writings of many modern critics: Robert L. Selig, for example, who refers to Kingcote as “a shabby-genteel loafer” (*George Gissing*, 1983, p. 43) or John Halperin, who writes that Kingcote ruins the novel – “for who, besides a biographer, a critic, or a psychoanalyst, can be interested in a neurasthenic hero who throws up his hands and sinks into a chair at the slightest annoyance?” (*Gissing: A Life in Books*, 1982, p. 64). Coustillas is right to identify the frailties of contemporary reviewers of the novel but when he

comments on “the elementary artistic level of the average critic in those days” (p. xxi), he seems to imply an advance in sophistication not always borne out by modern criticism. His own work, though, for this splendid new edition shows how much criticism can achieve by respect for accuracy, assiduous scholarship and patient, long-term commitment. He and Grayswood Press are to be congratulated for making available in such handsome form one of Gissing’s still lesser known novels.— David Grylls

Notes and News

That Gissing’s name and significant allusions to his works continue to appear in unexpected places we constantly receive fresh evidence. Recently Tony Petyt came across a quotation from *The Nether World* in a volume edited by Ed Glinert and published by Harper Collins in 2008. It contains accounts of the deaths and funerals of real and fictitious people who died in London and is entitled *London’s Dead*. In the section dealing with Clerkenwell, the editor quotes from Gissing’s novel the passage describing the funeral arranged by the Peckovers from their house at Clerkenwell Close.

Another book that would have been likely to remain unnoticed by the Gissing community if the author had not chanced to be a friend of some Gissingites is *Michellany* by John Michell (Michellany Editions, 2010). We still remember a review by John of a Harvester Press title in the 1970s or 1980s but he became better known to Gissing collectors after he reissued in collaboration with Richard Adams, for their friends at Christmas time, a number of short stories like “A Victim of Circumstances” and “The Prize Lodger” from the eighties onwards. His unpretentious contributions to Gissing studies can best be appreciated by consulting *George Gissing: The Definitive Bibliography* (Rivendale Press, 2005), the last one being a preface to the beautifully illustrated reprint of “The Fate of Humphrey Snell” in 2008. He died in the spring of 2009, and the book mentioned above is a posthumous homage consisting of articles he wrote over the years and essays by relatives and friends. He was the author of many books, the best-known of which is perhaps his scholarly study of Shakespeare and the anti-Stratfordian hypotheses, which fascinated him. The selection of his occasional writings collected in *Michellany*, subtitled “A John Michell Reader,” contains three allusions to Gissing, who was among his favourite authors. We shall remember John as an original personality, always friendly and

humorous, knowledgeable on numberless subjects—from Plato to Shakespeare, from megalithic monuments to flying saucers, from his beloved Glastonbury to William Cobbett the Radical Traditionalist, and much more—a man inseparable from his long-time friend Richard Adams, of Richard Adams Associates, 2 Blenheim Crescent, London W11 1NN.

Two important articles on Gissing and the Underwood family have appeared in the *Camden History Review*, an annual publication it would seem. Some readers will remember that Robin Woolven published in 2004 a masterly enquiry into Gissing's London homes in the same journal. The article on the Underwood family, concerned for several generations with the erection of hundreds of monuments in Hampstead Cemetery, doubtless tells us considerably more than Gissing ever knew about Edith's ancestors and relatives. Like the other article, devoted specifically to Edith, it is illustrated by the two authors Marianne Colloms and Dick Weindling. The photograph of Gissing's second wife is that to be found in the *Collected Letters*, but most of the others have the interest of novelty. The view of 25 St. Paul's Crescent taken by Mr. Weindling last June shows that Edith's home is still very much what it used to be in her lifetime. A modest house, it has been kept in good repair in the last 120 years. To the best of our knowledge no. 5 Mansfield Road, where Edith lived for a while after Gissing left her, is a new document in Gissing's studies as is the view of the entrance to Charminster Cemetery, where Edith was buried in 1917. The pictorial advertisement published by Underwood and Sons, Monumental Sculptors, in 1929, is also something of a curiosity. Perhaps the most arresting discovery is the photo of a cousin of Edith, Richard Underwood, whose face is not unlike Edith's. He was "Overseer of the Poor" and died in September 1913, aged 71. Naturally, as regards the Gissing family, a few factual errors crept into these articles. On one point the authors have been misled by a recent biographer whose identity will easily be guessed. Let no one imagine that Alfred Gissing succeeded in publishing the biography of his father he wrote in the 1930s. That Edith maltreated Walter is not an assumption, but a proven fact.

Bouwe Postmus, who was recently again in Gissing's footsteps in southern Italy, visited various places we saw together about a decade ago. Like all readers of *By the Ionian Sea* he is puzzled by the unsolved mystery about the death of Alaric, in life as well as in literature, and he has sent us an English translation by Bayard Taylor and Lilian Bayard of the German poem "The Grave of Alaric" by August von Platen-Hallermünde (1796-

1835). Still more impressive is a poem hitherto overlooked by Gissing scholars, the work of Eugene Lee-Hamilton, who was born in London in 1845 and died in Bagni di Lucca, Italy in 1907, and on whom information can be found in the new Oxford DNB as well as in Wikipedia. Entitled “The Secret of the Busento,” this beautiful poem in thirteen four-line stanzas was first published, Bouwe Postmus tells us, in the author’s *Poems and Transcripts* (1878). Gissing is very unlikely to have known it; nowhere in his diary and correspondence does he mention the poet, which, considering the poor bibliographical tools available in his lifetime, is hardly surprising. For health reasons Lee-Hamilton’s life was a pathetic one: he was almost totally paralyzed for years, but strangely enough recovered his mobility before he was eventually the victim of a new paralytic stroke. Whether he knew Gissing’s travel narrative is uncertain, but no one, it would seem, has tried to answer the question after consulting his papers which are held by Colby College, Waterville, Maine.

Lee-Hamilton was acquainted with Edith Wharton, Paul Bourget and Henry James. Among his works is a metrical translation of Dante’s *Inferno* (1898). In 1903 he made a selection from his poems for the Canterbury Poets series for which William Sharp, who admired Gissing’s works, wrote a preface. His poem, “The Secret of the Busento,” is reproduced below.

Among Bouwe Postmus’s discoveries in the deep Italian south and elsewhere is a horse-drawn vehicle like that which carried Gissing from Paola to Cosenza and of which a description occurs in *By the Ionian Sea*. It can be assumed that when he left Catanzaro for Squillace in driving rain, the journey took place in a similar vehicle.

Another discovery from the same source is a review of *The Odd Women* in the *Atlantic Monthly* (“Comment on New Books,” September 1893, pp. 420-21) which is partly thoughtful, partly nonsensical on account of the reactionary views it expresses.

In collaboration with Lorenz E. Baumer, of the University of Geneva, Domenico Marino, the archaeologist of Crotona, whose great-grandfather was immortalized by Gissing in his travel narrative, organized an exhibition entitled “O dieux de Crotona! Lieux et témoignages du sacré à l’intérieur d’une ville antique de Calabre” at the University of Geneva, which could be seen from 1 October to 22 December. The exhibition will be on show in Paris at the Institut national d’histoire de l’art from 15 January to 1 April 2011. Link: <http://www.expo-crotona.com/>

Roger Milbrandt, who will be reading a paper on “The Hope of Pessimism” at the York Conference in March, pointed to two doubtful transcriptions in the published version of Gissing’s essay. On p. 82 of *George Gissing: Essays and Fiction*, “far from deriving such subordination” should read “far from desiring...;” on p. 83 “penalties” should read “faculties.” We are grateful to David Frasier of the Lilly Library for sending us photocopies of the two passages in Gissing’s handwriting.

Hazel Bell, the renowned indexer who published a greatly revised index to *Henry Ryecroft* in this journal, continues to send us references to Gissing she comes across while working on a variety of subjects. First she reminds us that in his book *Not Entitled: A Memoir* (Harper/Collins, 1996) Frank Kermode had the following passage on Gissing: “He was one of those men—probably more common then than now—who seemed, in middle age, to have settled for a perfectly satisfying solitariness. He did whatever he thought right for him to do, and declined to do anything else, a sort of variant on *Bartleby the Scrivener*: I prefer not to. Or perhaps a more than usually contented Gissing character.”

Another book, Hazel Bell tells us, on the fringe of Gissing’s territory is *London Clerical Workers, 1880-1914: Development of the Labour Market* by Michael Heller (Pickering and Chatto, 2010). An extract from p. 10 situates Gissing among writers either not unknown to him like Arnold Bennett, Walter Besant, Jerome K. Jerome and Pett Ridge or who were to write about him more or less congenially such as Shan Bullock and perhaps Virginia Woolf. But the volume in which Ms Bell found Gissing in a place of honour is *Underground Writing: The London Tube from George Gissing to Virginia Woolf*, a hardback by David Welsh obtainable from Liverpool University Press at the steep price of £70. It is described as an entirely new treatment of the London Underground, providing a study of the fictional cartography of the first underground railway in the world of the 19th and 20th centuries. The subject, as the title indicates, is studied in a broadly literary perspective, and Gissing occupies the whole of chapter 1, “The Kingdom of Shadows: the infernal underground of George Gissing.” The author is said to have spent eight years working on London Transport and British Rail.

Pickering and Chatto announce the publication of *The Heroic Life of George Gissing*, by Pierre Coustillas. The announcement reads:

George Gissing (1857-1903) lived a life worthy of the plot from one of his own novels. An exceptionally gifted man, born into relatively genteel comfort, he nonetheless managed to enter into two disastrous marriages with working-class women, got thrown out of university for stealing, spent a month doing hard labour in prison and died before he was the age of fifty. It is all the more surprising then, that he still managed to write twenty-three novels, over a hundred short stories, as well as works of literary criticism and a travelogue. This ambitious three-volume biography of Gissing examines both his life and writing both chronologically and in close detail.

Coustillas's exhaustive research is based on all the known surviving correspondence, Gissing's works and every piece of literary criticism on Gissing from 1880 onwards. Press archives from England, America, the former Colonies, France and Germany have all been consulted. This approach by the foremost authority on Gissing, allows new insights into his life and work.

[the following points are then highlighted]

- The most extensively researched biography of Gissing ever published.
- Charts both Gissing's personal and literary life in detail, using a wide range of sources.
- Examines for the first time the growth of Gissing's reputation over the century since his death.

The book will appear in three volumes, each priced at £60/\$99, Vol. I: 1857-1886, July 2011, Vol. II: 1887-1897, January 2012, Vol. III: 1898-1903, July 2012.

Recent Publications

Volume

George Gissing, *New Grub Street*, Oxford World's Classics. This new impression is the third with the latest avatar of the front cover. £9.99.

Articles, etc.

Akemi Yoshida, "The Complex Problem of a Woman Violinist in George Gissing's 'The Whirlpool,'" *Annual Report of Studies in Liberal Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 14 (2009), pp. 41-57.

Jean Raimond, "Comptes rendus," *Etudes Anglaises*, January-March 2010, pp. 119-21. Review of *Spellbound: George Gissing*, ed. Christine Huguet.

Aaron Matz, "Reviews," *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, June 2010, pp. 122-26. Review of Paul Delany's biography of Gissing and of Lewis Moore's critical study of his works.

David Trotter, "Savage Rush," *London Review of Books*, 21 October 2010, pp. 30-31. Review of *Underground Writing* by David Welsh (for this book, see "Notes and News" in the present number).

J. C., "N.B. Retro Romp," *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 November 2010, p. 36. The last two paragraphs are devoted to Gissing.

Atsuko Miyake, "A Struggle for Hegemony through the Art of Furnishing," *Studies in Victorian Culture*, November 2010, pp. 31-46. The article (in Japanese) is concerned with the representations of wavering gender roles in *The Odd Women* and *In the Year of Jubilee* (this journal is issued by the Victorian Studies Society of Japan).

Marianne Colloms and Dick Weindling, "Edith Gissing: the madwoman in the asylum?" and "'Underwoods, opposite the Cemetery': a family of stone masons," *Camden History Review*, Vol. 34 (2010), pp. 6-13 and 14-18. For those two important illustrated articles on Edith Underwood Gissing and the Underwood family see "Notes and News" in this number.

Francesco Marroni, *Victorian Disharmonies: A Reconsideration of Nineteenth Century English Fiction*, Rome: The John Cabot University Press, distributed by the University of Delaware Press, 2010. Chapter 5 is devoted to *The Whirlpool*. First published in Italian by Carocci in 2002.

Mitsuharu Matsuoka (ed.), *Society and Culture in the Times of Elizabeth Gaskell*. A Bicentennial Commemoration Volume, 2010. For Gissing the index refers us to pp. 437, 596, 605, 636-39, 641-42, and 644.

The Secret of the Busento

Eugene Jacob Lee-Hamilton

Deep beneath the flowing river
Sleeps the great Barbarian King,
While his requiem for ever
Overhead the waters sing.

There from man by nature guarded,
Was he laid in days of old,
In a triple bier enshrouded,
Wrought of silver, bronze, and gold.

Say, Busento, thou its keeper,
Where lies Alaric the Goth?
Thou hast sworn to hide the sleeper?
Time absolves thee of thy oath.

In the dead of night they brought him
To the startled river-bank;
While the world still living thought him,
They the coffined monarch sank.

By the torches' light they laid him
Deep within its rocky bed,
And a last farewell they bade him,
Him the greatest of their dead.

Ere the pearly light of morning
On the little party broke,
The Arian Chiefs a word of warning
To the listening River spoke:

“Our nation's richest treasure
To thy bosom we confide;
Let thy depths no stranger measure,
But the King for ever hide.

“As thy water onward dashes,
Let it keep his tomb from shame;
In thy charge we leave his ashes,

In the world's his endless fame.”

Thus in manner strange and hurried,
Under night's protecting wing,
Those stern Gothic warriors buried
Alaric their mighty King.

As the stream's retarded current
Rolled o'er his eternal home,
So the great barbaric torrent
Rolled on o'er the grave of Rome.

Goth and Vandal, Sueve and Lombard,
Hun and Alan, wave on wave,
None of all their kings unnumbered
Had as grand or safe a grave.

Guardian of a lonely glory,
Well hast thou the secret kept,
Fourteen centuries of story,
Undisturbed the Goth has slept.

Noble river, none could firmer
Keep his plighted word than thou;
Alone the poet in thy murmur
Hears the name of Alaric now.

