

THE GISSING NEWSLETTER

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

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Gissing on Matters of War and Ethics
Two Half-Forgotten Essays

[The two following essays have never been reprinted. They are reproduced here in the belief that very few people interested in the author have ever had an opportunity of reading them; also in the hope that they will be welcomed by our readers. “Tyrtaeus” was published in the ephemeral *Review of the Week* (November 4, 1899) and “The Coming of the Preacher” in *Literature*, the ancestor of the *Times Literary Supplement* (January 6, 1900).]

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Editorial correspondence should be sent to the editor:
10, rue Gay-Lussac, 59110-La Madeleine, France
and all other correspondence to C.C. KOHLER, The Gatehouse,
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“Tyrtaeus”

Military music has everlasting charm for the ear of the populace. In broadcloth or in shoddy, civilians keep rhythmic step as the blare goes by, half-moved to envy of the straight-backed fellows on their way to shoot and be shot at. Even upon ears less long the martial strain falls seductively; it touches the primal instinct, wakes the racial memory, and he who to the core of his self-conscious being execrates the thought of war is surprised to find himself footing tramp-tramp, nodding a cadence to brass and drum. The same with warlike verse. Challenges of the music-hall have their audience, fit and not few. A minority, reading their daily paper, come one day upon verses by Mr. Swinburne, and, however little disposed to the mood heroic, cannot read to the close without feeling

their bosoms swell. "Strike, England, and strike home!" Here is the classic note; the poet, in humour of high menace, imprecates nobly. But of those who perforce submit, there are some who resent this influence even of the singer dear to them. It is no question of politics; the loud appeal may or may not stir to something worthy of England's memories. The question raised is literary and ethical. Certain minds of our day find a harsh incongruity between their conception of the poet's calling and the thought of one who incites to warfare. They ask whether the poet sings with sanction – not of folk and Parliament – but of the conscience of human kind in this latter day.

Tyrtaeus, to such unpractical persons, seems nowadays something worse than an anachronism. Poetry concerns itself, as always, with the woes and strivings and madneses of man; it depicts, idealises, whatsoever of ill befalls humanity; but – save perhaps in most exceptional circumstances – noble verse may no longer raise the battle-cry. For, indeed, the poet of our day who sounds that Tyrtaean note sets himself consciously against the supreme ideal of civilisation. Consciously. Every man of enough education to pen a rhyme knows that amid all conflicts of opinion, under all disguises of passion, the thought of the civilised world abhors brute strife and looks for the ascendancy of reason. "Wild war, that breaks the converse of the wise" – it is our century's judgment. Mr. Kipling himself, having more brains than ordinary men, must be credited with this knowledge. One cannot easily conceive that, in his quieter moments, Mr. Kipling would refuse sympathy with those who hope that men will some day no longer cut each other's throats and explode each other's heads off. If no wrong be done him by such argument, should not even the laureate of the Empire think twice before he blows that ringing clarion of his, and ask himself whether his laurels are more likely to be lasting for having been dipped in blood? Poetic genius is charged with peculiar responsibility, inasmuch as poetry speaks more directly than any other form

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of utterance, from heart to heart. Singers of the old world, their ethical ideal necessarily including warfare, with reason took full advantage of their power; he whose song inspired the lust of fighting had won his aspiration and deserved gloriously of his countrymen. But, at the end of the nineteenth century, can many junctures be easily imagined which would give an English poet undoubted right to cry in his own person, on the strength of his own conviction, for bloody onset?

The Turks in Armenia? Mr. Watson found it warrantable, and wrote not a few sonorous sonnets; but no one laid hand on sword. Milton himself could not have moved his country to action in that unprofitable cause. Verse, we well know, no longer has such power; a poet can but feed the flame of wrath which has been already kindled by much coarser hands. And is it worthy of the crowned singers to take such service? Are the influences on the side of civilisation so numerous and so powerful that poetry, even for a moment, can league with darkness? War is no longer an exultant choice, but, at best, a grim – or grimy – necessity. Let it be decreed in conclave of economists; let its story and its issues be registered in baldest, briefest prose. Listen to those sweet voices which make the welkin ring with echo, in their own accent, of "Strike, England, and strike home!" Enough, and to spare, of enthusiasm; good cause or evil, never fear but the old blood-thirst will be readily enough excited by those born to such work; the singer, incautiously advancing, is hustled in a howling mob, and the divine Muse veils her countenance afar.

Tradition pleads the cause of warrior poets. But it is a tradition which will no longer bear grave scrutiny, and if, as seems too probable, the number of those who can relish poetry will grow less and less, the true poet will ere long feel no impulse to utter his passing mood of vehemence before a little group but coldly responsive to this vein. Even now, does not this sonnet¹ seem to shrink painfully, half shamefaced, in the corner of a huge news-sheet? Idealists of whom there is here question would fain believe that, in a time not hopelessly remote, the singer will be as little

inclined to aid a war-cry with the dower of his verse as he would be nowadays to serve by that means any vulgar form of turpitude. Wars will still be waged; men will slay each other by the book of arithmetic – by books of many a science yet undreamt of; but he to whom is entrusted the high cause of humanity, who speaks the noblest thoughts in the most fervent tongue, will stand aloof from all that tumult, waiting the return of calm.

1 - Swinburne's poem, "Tyrtæus," calling Britons to war against the Boers.

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"The Coming of the Preacher"

Tourgueneff, in the last letter he wrote to Tolstoi, made pathetic entreaty that his friend would "come back to literature." We know what he meant by that; not "The Kreutzer Sonata," nor "Resurrection," but some work of art worthy to succeed those of the master's prime. The appeal was too late. Tolstoi's philosophy had become religion; the man of letters was subdued by the prophet; and when, years after, he set himself the question, "What is Art?" the answer not only condemned his own works of imagination, but declared the impossibility, in such a day as ours, of any true art at all. The influence of Tolstoi has been great, though vague; it affects the better thought of our time, and is helping to shape that of the future. From one point of view, no man living can so justly be called representative. His career displays in an individual the progressive characteristics of an epoch. If one thing can be said with certainty of a time so rife in contradictions it is that, whilst the hope of Art steadily declines, the craving for spiritual direction is more and more declared. We are familiar with the complaint that literature is nowadays but mediocrity, however good as such. When, it is asked, will arise the new master in fiction, drama, poetry? When will art once more be illumined by genius? Not yet awhile, we may be sure. The intellect of mankind is too uneasy; life is too anarchic. There will appear no great imaginative craftsman until the soul of the world has in some degree been set at rest. Not the Artist have we now to look for, but the Preacher.

Literature (in the special sense) is everywhere affected by a restless preoccupation with things alien to its sphere – for the moment, nowhere so markedly as in France, where particular reasons enhance the universal disquietude. A group of leading authors strive to direct the destinies of their country in a time of grave disorder. M. Zola, in the leisure left him by political strife, writes fiction vehemently didactic. M. Bourget turns from psychology of the boudoir to support the cause of religion. M. Maurice Barrès publishes a series of novels significantly entitled "Le Roman de l'Energie Nationale" – in truth scarce novels at all, but moralized studies of recent French history. These typical writers have found something which interests them more than literary craft, something which seems to them decidedly more important than debate as to the methods and the sphere of art. So with M. Coppée, who publishes a little prose volume, recounting his conversion to the old faith, and presently finds himself haranguing Nationalist meetings; so also with M. Jules Lemaître, who comes forth from the study to put his critical intellect at the service of what he deems patriotism. From art, from letters, these men have turned to preaching. Literature in itself no

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longer satisfies them. They seek to communicate, with all the vigour they can use, a social or political creed, a moral or spiritual conviction.

To a certain extent, undoubtedly, this movement in France is indebted to English influence;

upon England it will assuredly react. Our fiction has always been more or less a vehicle of moral teaching; but the market (novel-writing in England is now so largely a branch of industry) not long ago turned against stories "with a purpose"; there came a revival of romance, side by side with a new and very popular school of blood-and-thunder. Yet spiritual unrest has not ceased to make use of the novel. Even the neo-barbarism which seeks an outlet in story-telling must be regarded as a protest against "mere" literature, as an effort to teach some primitive theory of human rights and obligations. Writers who are prompted to "say something" have recourse to the novel because it seems their best hope of obtaining a wide audience. Even an active revolutionist such as William Morris could find in the end no better way of presenting his social ideas than by trying to resuscitate an old form of romantic narrative. The flood of fiction which is not art, which less and less cares to call itself art, having what is meant for a higher intention, will again flow. Its common characteristic is a lack of the novelist's prime virtue, the ability to create and present convincing personalities. In the argumentative and exhortative novel we are not concerned with persons, but with types. This is observable in the fiction of all countries, not less in work which retains some literary savour, than in that which, beneath its disguise, is mere pulpit or platform ineptitude. It serves a purpose in preparing the way for another kind of writing, which will at once have literary value and be a response to urgent spiritual need. A certain order of mind found its prophet in the late Henry Drummond, whose writings, old matter in new phrasing, had so vast a public. The reception of a book such as Maeterlinck's "Trésor des Humbles" by readers of a somewhat different class is in the same way significant.

The true interest of the time is ethical, or religious – use which word you will. Physical science, which vaunted so large a promise, stands bankrupt before the human soul; it has quickened hunger, yet offers no food; it has stung the multitudes with a base ambition, and smirched the ideal even of those who try to hold aloof. The man of science has allied himself with the man of the shop; his discoveries have their market value, and for the present no other. A day may come when all this knowledge will be transmuted into spiritual gain; to that end, we look for the new power in literature, which shall sum and intensify and direct the striving of a transitional age. Our great preachers of the mid-century seem very far behind; they were, in fact, retrospective. Carlyle, puritan

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disciple of German philosophy, wrathfully ignored the modern world; Ruskin, puritan worshipper of beauty, recognized the forces amid which he lived only to despise them and to despair. Their voices are not silent; they speak under the senseless turmoil, and truths to which they have given noblest utterance will pass into the teaching of him we wait for. The academic irony of Matthew Arnold addressed itself to a smaller circle, but his message will not be forgotten when men once more have leisure for things of the mind. Culture, he well saw, was growing all but impossible beyond the guarded closes of a fortunate few; yet culture, as Arnold understood it, must needs enter into the new civilization. One leader of science, who occasionally called himself a lay preacher, had, thanks to his philosophical studies, a clearer vision of man's life than that enjoyed by most of his fellow workers; Huxley's grasp of philosophic idealism might have been a force for good had he but seen that this fundamental perception was in every sense more valuable, of more importance to the world at large, than the most conscientious study of phenomena. No otherwise, indeed, can men be unburdened of a materialism growing ever more sordid as its power extends than by coming to understand that all "science" has for its ultimate discovery the futility, the meaninglessness, of a materialistic view of life. Carlyle began with this text; had he more closely adhered to it, his influence would to-day be more observable. Man goes a far way round to attain his ends. When at length there shall come the inevitable reaction against tyrannic worldliness, it will be seen that the

modern mind has, with infinite labour, merely succeeded in re-establishing a truth ages ago known and acted upon.

Mr. Lecky – he, too, addressing his scholarly mind to questions above scholarship – has given us a “Map of Life.” It is a Law of Life that men are seeking. They will seek long before they arrive at a new synthesis of intellectual and moral convictions with authority equal to that of the bygone Creed. But we may not have long to wait for a clear voice amid our tumult which shall rebuke the madding world, and recall its thought to things essential. The new preacher, like him of old, will begin by crying “Vanity!”

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Meeting Dr. Sculco's Son

Francesco Badolato

During my stay on the Ionian coast of Calabria last summer, I went to Cotrone and once more paid homage to the only remaining pillar of the Temple of Hera, which Gissing watched through his field-glasses in 1897, but which he was never to approach. Illness prevented him from getting to the end of the Lacinian promontory, yet it put him in a position to have a description of this bit of Magna Graecia in the words of a man well acquainted with the site of the Temple – Dr. Riccardo Sculco.

Every time I am in Cotrone, I make some discovery and inevitably ponder on Gissing's stay in such an unlikely place. This time I had the pleasure of meeting one of Dr. Sculco's sons – Dr. Silvio Sculco, a dentist. Dr. Silvio worked at the local hospital from which he retired a few years ago; he is now seventy-two years old, and lives with his wife in his father's house, the front of which is still the same as in the past though the inside has been modernized. Dr. Sculco was so generous as to offer me a typewritten copy of a piece he has written – a kind of history of Cotrone families in connection with some important events in the past and present of the town. Two pages of it are devoted to Gissing's stay.

Dr. Sculco's most interesting passage is one in which he reports reminiscences of his father's conversations with the novelist: “Gissing wished I could go to England with him and said so more than once, assuring me that I could prosper as a doctor and as an individual there, but my father had married some years before and he already had two children; furthermore, he was very fond of the town of which he was a councillor, and of which he had been a mayor for a time. So he declined Gissing's generous invitation, and was pleased to continue his work in great, ‘wild’ Calabria.”

Dr. Silvio Sculco adds that “sixty years later a French scholar, Pierre Coustillas, followed in Gissing's footsteps – trying to study the differences between Calabria at the end of last century and the Calabria of to-day. While Professor Coustillas was here in Cotrone, he very kindly thought of visiting my father's tomb, but he could not in the end as he found the gate of the cemetery locked. He also tried to see my father's house with the heraldic bearings “lo Scorpione” over the front-door – but he was unable to do so as the *stemma* (bearings) has been taken away and we do not know by whom.”

Of course one is anxious to know more about Dr. Riccardo Sculco. “My father,” his son

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writes, “was born in 1858, and took a first class degree at the University of Naples.” When asked to give a memorable example of his father's activities, he recalled with pleasure the assistance he

brought, together with the mayor of the town, Signor Luigi Berlingieri, and a few other willing persons, to the inhabitants of Capocolonna. He sailed there from Cotrone on a little boat in 1887, ten years before Gissing's visit, at a time when Capocolonna was infected by cholera. Afterwards a bronze medal was awarded to Dr. Sculco and his companions for civil valour by the Minister of the Interior. A tablet put up in the Berlingieri private chapel commemorates the bravery of those citizens of Cotrone who assisted their fellow-creatures under dramatic circumstances.

My visit to Cotrone was a propitious one in another respect. I found out in Dr. Riccardo Sculco's agenda for 1897 the entries he made concerning Gissing's illness. The days on which he visited his English patient at the Albergo Concordia are clearly indicated. The entry reads in part "soddisf[acente]," i.e. "satisfactory" the day when the novelist began to feel better. Then, also clearly written, follows the doctor's fee – 24 lire. It was a very small sum indeed, which doubtless testifies to Dr. Sculco's kind-heartedness; perhaps he realized that Gissing was not a rich man. I wish it were possible to make a facsimile reproduction of the relevant pages of Dr. Sculco's agenda for the readers of the *Newsletter*, but material difficulties stand in the way. However, it is to be hoped that an opportunity will offer before long in some new edition of *By the Ionian Sea*.

Review

Shigeru Koike, "The Education of George Gissing," in *English Criticism in Japan*, compiled and edited by Earl Miner, Yokohama: University of Tokyo Press, 1972, pp. 233-258.

It is one of the peculiarities of Gissing scholarship that for all that we know about the events of his life, the background to many of the more significant events remain irritatingly obscure. For instance, we know that he was expelled from Owens College, Manchester, at the age of nineteen for stealing from his fellow students. We have evidence to show that this act of theft was prompted by the desire to keep a young alcoholic prostitute named Marianne Helen Harrison off the streets. That

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it was more than just a case of playing Robin Hood to Maid "Marianne" is indicated by his subsequent decision to marry her and remain faithful through the harrowing years of their marriage. But what his own rationale was for choosing to help her in such a way – a way that could only ruin his chances of ever attaining academic and social acceptance, of ever being at ease with those to whom he was intellectually and temperamentally akin – has never been satisfactorily or factually established. Nor has his second marriage, to Edith Underwood who was uneducated and shrewish, been much more explicable. Suggestions and tentative explanations have been made by critics, contemporaries and students of Gissing, generally based on interpretations of Gissing's personality (e.g., he was idealistic/naïve/infatuated/masochistic/sexually starved) and of the *Zeitgeist* of nineteenth century England (e.g., it encouraged moral originality). We now have Shigeru Koike's reconstruction of Gissing's motives and, as the title of his article indicates, it is to the education of George Gissing – "from the beginning, when he expressed his outlook on life with the boyish motto 'Perseverance,' to the end when he recapitulated his life and work with a murmur of 'Patience'" – that he turns for his explanation. "So doing," Mr. Koike states, "one may try to answer the paradoxical question: how did it come to pass that this man..., so devoted to serious study and education...found himself, after all, an obvious failure, alien to his own country, all because of his zeal for education?"

While Mr. Koike's Swinnertonian estimation of Gissing's achievements may raise a few eyebrows, what is more difficult to give credence to is the extent to which he sees Gissing to have carried his "zeal for education." In the first place, it is never consistently clear what Mr. Koike means by the term "education." Since he uses it to refer to the various phases of Gissing's intellectual, spiritual, experiential and artistic development, it verges dangerously on becoming a mere counter at times. He suggests that "a liberal education" was Gissing's early aim at Owens College, since he was then under the illusion that it would allow him to acquire the title of "an intellectual aristocrat *de facto*." Here Mr. Koike relies on the characterization of Godwin Peak in *Born in Exile* to back his statements, taking Gissing's conditional acknowledgement to Eduard Bertz ("Peak is myself – one phase of myself") as the springboard to speculation. However, we would do well to remember Gissing's later injunction – this time to Gabrielle Fleury – that a conception of his character be not formed from a reading of his books since we "will not find [his] true self in these books" (see his letter to her, dated August 18, 1898). Mr. Koike, it must be admitted, moves beyond "these books" to those of E. M. Forster, seeing remarkable similarity

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between the plight of Leonard Bast in *Howards End* and what he surmises Gissing's state to have been when he became "aware of the futility of his education." Yet Mr. Koike returns eventually to Godwin Peak and considers Gissing's disillusionment in terms of Peak's disillusionment – as the realization that the most he could wish for was to become "an intellectual aristocrat *parvenu*." Alienation followed rapidly on the heels of disillusionment (a pattern Mr. Koike sees as being common among university people in the twentieth century – which either proves how far ahead of his time Gissing was, or how Victorian present academic circles are), and to compensate for having "failed in educating himself," Gissing decided to redeem Marianne Helen Harrison, marrying her in order to educate her. In a vertiginous leap from speculation to statement Mr. Koike continues:

A victim of a "Cophetua complex," [Gissing] was now as eager and patient as ever to carry out his mission of enlightenment in somebody inferior to him both socially and intellectually, somebody whom he could educate as he would like to, so that he might enjoy vicarious satisfaction, and from whom he might expect the gratitude due to a savior.

It might be interesting to note at this point that Gissing's sister Ellen once said of him: "...his desire to teach others was free from all thought of self" – a viewpoint that Mr. Koike himself sees fit to quote quite straightforwardly at a later stage of his discussion.

However, Gissing as parasitic pedagogue is a little easier on one's disbelief than Gissing as someone "obsessively sentimental about education," so much so that he was prompted into his second marriage by the hope that in Edith Underwood he had found a woman who would "satisfy his passions, sexual and educational, at once." Mr. Koike sets up a parallel between Gissing and the protagonist of his short story, "A Lodger in Maze Pond," interpreting Gissing's motives in the light of the protagonist's rationalizations for marrying twice, each time to a girl who is his inferior socially and intellectually. But what Mr. Koike fails to acknowledge is that the protagonist's assumption that he is motivated by the altruistic desire to educate his wives is revealed to be little more than a none too successful attempt to justify his need for a woman and his sense of inadequacy before more refined women. Surely we are not to deny Gissing the ironic distance he sets up between himself as narrator and the protagonist as character.

Gissing's first two marriages failed, it is true. But have we grounds for assuming that they

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failed because of Gissing's condescending attitude to Marianne and Edith as he played the role of Lord Munificence of Intelligence? Mr. Koike thinks so apparently, for he ventures to conjecture that if Gissing "had not tried to educate his two wives at all, or if he had known a suitable way to educate them [...] Nell might have had recourse to drink less often and Edith might have had fewer fits of madness." He remarks on the "somewhat priggish and patronizing tone" of some of Gissing's letters to his sisters advising them on the course of their studies. But nowhere have we evidence that he treated his wives in a similar fashion. He himself saw his second marriage as marked by "criminal recklessness" (see his letter to Gabrielle Fleury in August 1898) rather than by any deliberate plan of education. And though he did remark in a letter to Eduard Bertz that Edith "might be trained to [his] kind of life," we cannot assume that he saw training as synonymous with educating. He might have hoped to make Edith more aware of things outside her own class and background, a little more receptive to his thoughts, but to see him as planning for her what Mr. Koike calls "a system of education" would make Gissing not only lacking in realistic insight but positively blinkered by overweening egotism. If Mr. Koike had more verifiable facts in which to ground his speculations we would be in his debt for a new perspective on Gissing. As it is, his views remain provocative but, unfortunately, only speculative.

It is when he ventures to comment on Gissing's incomplete success in educating his sisters that Mr. Koike moves on surer ground. He argues convincingly that Ellen, whom Gissing regarded as more sympathetic to his opinions than the more conservative Margaret, did not achieve the "expansion of intelligence" that Gissing held to be the true worth of education. She disapproved of the novel *The Emancipated*, suspecting that she was the model for Miriam Baske who was, ironically, Gissing's idea of a truly educated woman – emancipated intellectually, spiritually and emotionally. The "provincialism" that Gissing had noted in his sisters won through whatever attempts he made to expand their minds.

That Gissing did not attempt to "educate" his third wife (under common law) is attributed to the fact that he regarded her as his intellectual equal. Gabrielle Fleury, French translator of many of Gissing's works, aspiring scholar and liberated woman, was, Mr. Koike suggests, one to whom Gissing turned for aid in developing his own education – of the mind as well as of the heart.

...it was *he* who was to learn and *she* to teach in the actual realization of his ideal scheme of an education into love. ... And perhaps it was ... in ... homage to her

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culture and, through that, to French literature in general, that he presented himself as pupil rather than as teacher.

However, with this reversal of roles there occurred a change in Gissing's writing style. As the impersonal form of fiction grew more strained in his hands, the personal narrative style (that marks *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* and *By the Ionian Sea*) became more conducive to him. It is Mr. Koike's surmise that as Gissing became more aware of the "intelligence of the heart" (to use Henry Ryecroft's term), he learned to subdue his own intellectual arrogance; but whether or not this brought him one step nearer to artistic maturity Mr. Koike leaves open to further speculation.

Yet Mr. Koike's view of the last phase of Gissing's education is distinctly bleak. He sees it to be "a mere continuation of the same endless education to which he had been, and would be, submitted all his life, and which was again to end in frustration." Even the last words that Gissing is reported to have uttered – "Patience, patience" (with a French accent) – become in Mr. Koike's

hands the crowning irony in Gissing's life, since it is the thesis of the article that patience, like perseverance, did little to help Gissing attain any satisfaction from his education – formal or experimental. – Ramola Sodhy

[Miss Sodhy is a graduate of the University of Malaysia at Kuala Lumpur where she wrote a thesis on Gissing. She is now a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Washington.]

Notes on *The Crown of Life*

P. F. Kropholler

[The edition referred to is the first English edition published by Methuen & Co. in 1899.]

- p. 4, l. 13.

“Was soll es bedeuten?” From the opening line of Heinrich Heine's famous poem *Lorelei* (“Ich weiss nicht, was soll es bedeuten”).

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- p. 11, l. 31.

“you help me to realise Horatius Cocles”; Publius Horatius Cocles, a Roman who for a time, all alone, opposed the army of Porsena, king of Etruria. He is described in Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*.

- p. 20, l. 23.

“his reverence for the great master who ruled (at Balliol)”: a reference to Benjamin Jowett (1817-93), who became Master of Balliol in 1870.

- p. 35, l. 15.

“To follow Knowledge like a sinking star...”: Tennyson: *Ulysses*, line 31.

- p. 38, l. 4.

“the soul of goodness in the man was corrupted”: perhaps a reference to Shakespeare: *King Henry V*, IV.I.4 (“There is some soul of goodness in things evil, | Would men observingly distil it out”).

- p. 39, l. 15.

“Emollit mores.” From Ovid: *Epistulae ex Ponto*, II, IX, 47. (“Adde quod ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes | Emollit mores nec sinit esse feros”).

- p. 47, l. 7.

“a small Indian rug being displayed as a thing of beauty”: the first line, of course, of Keats: *Endymion*.

- p. 47, l. 41.

“ecce signum”: occurs in Shakespeare: *King Henry IV*, Part I, II. IV.190. It is, however, a fairly common expression.

- p. 48, l. 20.

“the blind Fury with the abhorred shears”: Milton: *Lycidas*, line 75.

- p. 48, l. 32.

“the pale cast of thought”: Shakespeare: *Hamlet*, III.I.85.

- p. 51, l. 30.

“glorious war”: perhaps from Shakespeare: *Othello*, III.III.355 (“Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war”).

- p. 59, l. 30.

“haply the Queen Moon is on her throne, clustered around with all her starry fays”: Keats: *Ode to a Nightingale*, stanza IV, ll. 6-7.

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- p. 64, l. 26.

“a sounding cataract”: perhaps a reference to Wordsworth: “Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey,” line 76 (“The sounding cataract | Haunted me like a passion”).

- p. 69, l. 11.

“In a youthful poem [Jerome Otway] had sung of Love as ‘the crown of life.’”

This, together with the quotation from Victor Hugo on p. 104 (“l’amour c’est la couronne, | Laisse-toi couronner”) explains the title of this novel. The phrase “the crown of life” had, however, been in Gissing’s mind for a good many years. In *A Life’s Morning*, published 11 years before *The Crown of Life*, he spoke of ideal love as “that bliss which was the crown of life” (Ch. XI) and again in Ch. XVII of the same novel: “the ideal which saw the crown of life in passion triumphant.”

- p. 69, l. 15.

“the few chosen, where all are called”: “For many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew, XXII. 14).

- p. 69, l. 20.

“on the heights of noble life, a face shines before them, the face of one who murmurs ‘Guardami ben!’” Is this a misprint? In Dante’s *Purgatorio* (Canto XXX, line 73) the poet meets his beloved, who addresses him with the words: “Guardaci ben! Ben son, ben son Beatrice” (quoted from the edition by John D. Sinclair, who translates: “Look at me well; I am, I am indeed Beatrice.” It might be added that in *A Life’s Morning* (Ch. II) Mr. Athel, on meeting Beatrice Redwing, exclaims: “Guardami ben: ben son, ben son Beatrice!” Or is the misprint in Sinclair’s book? [Editor’s note: It is]

- p. 70, l. 13.

“Li ruscelletti che de’ verdi colli | Del Casentin discendon giuso in Arno.” Dante: *Inferno*, Canto XXX, lines 64-65. Sinclair translates: “The little streams that from the green hills of the Casentino flow down to the Arno.”

- p. 72, 1. 4.

“Con l’animo che vince ogni battaglia, | Se col suo grave corpo non s’accascia.” Dante: *Inferno*, Canto XXIV, 11. 53-54. Sinclair translates: “with the soul, which conquers in every battle if it sink not with its body’s weight.”

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- p.74, 1. 8.

“the English way of mirth between man and maid” (“the way of a man with a maid,” Proverbs XXX.19).

- p. 76, 1. 8.

“There’s a quotation from Virgil” – Irene must have been thinking of the *Aeneid*, VI.851: “Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento | (Hae tibi erunt artes), pacisque imponere morem, | Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos”).

- p. 77, 1. 32.”“the pink of modern maidenhood, fancy free.” “In maiden meditation, fancy-free”: Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, II.I.164.

- p. 80, 1. 31.

“we may really become a mere nation of shopkeepers.” A very common phrase, of course, usually ascribed to Napoleon. Other sources have been suggested, however, for instance Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*.

- p. 82, 1. 32.

“in corpore vili”: the complete version of this condemnation of vivisection is “Fiat experimentum in corpore vili.”

- p. 86, 1. 28.

“he suffered from the death of old friends, especially that of John Bright.” Bright died in 1889.

- p. 98, 1. 3.

“the wonted tenor of her life.” “the noiseless tenor of their way” occurs in Gray: *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, XIX.

- p. 98, 1. 9.

“blessings in disguise”: this expression would seem to come from the poet James Hervey (1714-58). It is, however, part of the normal vocabulary.

- p. 104, 1. 35.

Les Chants du Crépuscule by Victor Hugo, published in 1835.

-p. 110, 1. 25.

“De mortuis.” Ascribed to Chilo, but a common tag, of course.

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- p. 111, l. 17.

"I should quote Bumble about the law." In *Oliver Twist* (Ch. 51), Mr. Bumble says: "If the law supposes that,...the law is a ass – a idiot."

- p. 117, l. 8.

"Solvitur quaerendo." "Solvitur ambulando," which is proverbial, seems to be more usual.

- p. 122, last line

"airy nothings": Shakespeare speaks of "airy nothings" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V.I.16.

- p. 141, l. 26.

"avos": although Piers Otway knew Russian well he was wrong about *avos*. It does not mean "fire away" but "perhaps."

- p. 158, l. 12.

"When the next great war comes, newspapers will be the chief cause of it." Attacks on newspapers are very common in Gissing, for instance in *Ryecroft*, Summer VI and VII.

- p. 168, l. 1.

"the transcendent mood of Browning's ideal lover": probably a reference to "The Statue and the Bust," in which the reunion of two lovers is deferred year after year, until they realise they have been dreaming.

- p. 169, l. 18.

"custom's tyranny": in *Othello*, I.III.230, Shakespeare speaks of the "tyrant custom." There may be no connection, however.

- p. 170, l. 15.

"the chances of life": In *The Book of Common Prayer* (Holy Communion, Collects after the Offertory) we read: "All the changes and chances of this mortal life."

- p. 174, end

The quotation from Meredith is the eleventh and final stanza of "The Last Contention."

- p. 179, end

"Pride in their port": the quotation from Goldsmith comes from *The Traveller*, line 327.

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- p. 180, l. 16.

"Johnson defined Patriotism...as the last refuge of a scoundrel." From Boswell's *Life* (April 7, 1775).

- p. 182, l. 25.

"Again we meet in a London street – which is rhyme and sounds like Browning, doesn't it?" Is this an actual quotation? Or has it been merely made up by Daniel Otway? The rhythm is suggestive of

Browning's "Waring."

- p. 183, l. 16.

"lend me your ears": Shakespeare: *Julius Caesar*, III.II.79 ("Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears").

- p. 186, end

"*Quand on perd, par triste occurrence*": Alfred de Musset also supplied the motto for *Isabel Clarendon*. In a letter to Ellen Gissing, Musset is referred to in a list of "really great men." On the other hand, in his *Commonplace Book* Gissing complained of the ineptitude of the (French) language for poetry (45).

Apart from quotations from Victor Hugo and Alfred de Musset there is some more evidence of French (linguistic) influence in *The Crown of Life* (not surprising as it was written shortly after the first meeting with Gabrielle Fleury). On p. 170 we find "*borner la carrière à ses émotions*" and on p. 199 "*On n'est pas plus galant!*" The Derwent family has a French servant (Thibaut Rossignol) and Piers Otway is associated with a French-speaking Swiss (Moncharmont). Cf. also: "Take the best type of Frenchman, for instance. Is he necessarily fatuous in his criticism of us?" (p. 76).

- p. 196, l. 6.

"Nascitur non fit": "Nascimur poetae, fimus oratores" is attributed to Cicero.

- p. 204, l. 21.

"And then, if justice were done, that scoundrel would be hanged." The use of hanged is rather interesting. In his *Commonplace Book* (6) Gissing remarked that "he was hung" sounds "ghastly" and "he was hanged" "rather humorous."

- p. 271, l. 23.

"The bells in the country!" Remarks on church bells are remarkably frequent in Gissing's work.

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- p. 280, l. 36.

"Seaside – no; I don't like the seaside." Interesting to compare with Ryecroft's remarks on the seaside.

- p. 285, l. 9.

"Solus feci!" A fairly common tag. Derived from whom?

- p. 308, l. 32.

"Tell truth and shame – your Russian relatives." There are two sources for this quotation:

Ben Jonson: *Tale of a Tub*, II.I, 'Hark you, John Clay, if you have | Done any such thing, tell troth and shame the devil.

Shakespeare: *King Henry IV*, Part I, III.I.62, "O, while you live, tell truth, and shame the devil."

- p. 320, l. 19.

"There's a time for silence, but also a time for talking." Echoing the famous enumeration in Ch. 3 of Ecclesiastes.

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Publications

George Gissing, *Demos*, The Harvester Press, 1974, £1.25. Edited with an introduction by P. Coustillas. A paperback reissue of the 1972 edition.

Gillian Tindal, *The Born Exile: George Gissing*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1974, \$10.00.