

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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Wakefield, August 1977

At rare intervals Wakefield has heard single lectures on George Gissing but the two-day visit of Ros Stinton, Pierre Coustillas and Chris Kohler was the first occasion when there had been extended discussion of him in the city of his birth. In an attempt to fill the visitors’ time, Clifford Brook had arranged so many activities that only such dedicated acolytes could have survived the experience without mental and physical exhaustion.

The principal aim was to sound out local opinion on the future of Gissing’s childhood home, particularly the house behind what had been his father’s shop, and so the party spent the first afternoon looking over the house and shop. Even Pierre Coustillas could be seen to be surprised at

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the spaciousness of the accommodation and the others smiled as they saw him making mental alterations to Chapter 1 of his forthcoming biography.

A dinner had been arranged for the visitors to meet representatives of local societies and without the formality of speeches Eric Raper and Richard Knowles (President and Secretary of Wakefield Historical Society), Albert Nurse and Ray Perraudin (Past Presidents of Wakefield Civic Society), and John Goodchild (a member of both societies and Wakefield District Council’s

Archivist) kept up lively conversations with the visitors until a late hour. Pierre Coustillas still had one more experience that day as he was bedded in the room of Mrs. Gissing's house in Stoneleigh Terrace – now known as Stoneleigh Hotel – which Gissing described in *A Life's Morning* as James Hood's upstairs study.

The next morning was more business-like for the foursome who went to Wakefield Metropolitan District Council's Planning Department to talk with Mr. J. Micklethwaite (Deputy Chief Planning Officer) and Mr. A. Davison (the member of the Department who is most concerned with the Birthplace). These officials gave the impression that the Council was sympathetic to the proposition that the house should be renovated, and it became clear that only the shortage of money resulting from the present period of economic stringency, could limit the District Council's willingness to play its part if Gissingites would contribute towards the cost of renovating 2/4 Thompson's Yard. They would like tangible backing to the world-wide interest shown by many letters sent to the Council at the time the house was in danger of being demolished.

Clifford Brook's guided tour, that afternoon, of the Gissing sites in and around Wakefield was meant to give light relief though if it proved anything it was that there were more things to see than human legs should try to cover in half a day. The "trail" covered the buildings mentioned in *A Life's Morning* and "The Quarry on the Heath"; the houses occupied by Mrs. Gissing and her

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family during George's lifetime; and the school in Back Lane where George was educated until his father's death.

* * * * *

George Gissing's 'Anti-jingo book':

The Crown of Life and the 'question of Peace'

Ivan Melada
University of New Mexico

On August 29, 1898, much to the astonishment of Europe, Czar Nicholas II of Russia issued an invitation to all nations to confer over the limitation of armaments. "The Czar with an olive branch...that's something new in history," commented a Viennese newspaper. (1) The pronouncement from Russia observed that despite the yearning for peace over the past twenty years particularly, "the intellectual and physical strength of nations; labour and capital alike, have (sic) been unproductively consumed in building terrible engines of destruction." (2)

Writing to Eduard Bertz on September 4, 1898, George Gissing outlined a new novel he was writing and also indicated his surprise at the Czar's move: "In the book I am going to write, the question of Peace will be involved. It is a love story, but with large issues – philosophic . . . and cosmopolitan. The name is to be: 'The Crown of Life.' ... I don't know what to think of the Czar. It is so difficult to credit an aristocrat with high humanity. But the declaration undoubtedly has great importance." One English reaction to the Czar's call for peace was the formation of the Peace Crusade. On January 17, 1899 Gissing wrote another letter to Bertz announcing the completion of his new book which, in addition to its love story, ". . .contains a rather vigorous attack on militarism.

I have had to say hard things of all countries.” Having anticipated the Czar’s proposal, Gissing believed himself to be something of a prophet but was sensitive to possible criticism about having made the book to order so as to take advantage of the peace movement: “A strange thing that the

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writing of the book should be finished just when the ‘Peace Crusade’ is becoming active. I planned the story more than a year ago. Still more oddly, Russia has a great part in it. But it is not the first time that my thoughts have anticipated public tendencies. Of course everyone will think I have sat down in a hurry to write an opportune book.” Two weeks earlier, he had written to H. G. Wells calling *The Crown of Life* “an Anti-jingo book.” (3)

Gissing’s novel takes up the questions of peace, jingoism, and the role of the press as fomenter of war. But Gissing was a novelist as well as a social critic, and it is in the creation of the character of Lee Hannaford that he fixes attention upon a sinister aspect of industrial civilization at the end of the nineteenth century. Hannaford is one of those men who, as Ruskin put it, “if they had not made spears, would never have made pruning-hooks.” He is the armaments technologist with a zest for destruction.

It is a tribute to the human imagination that the belief in the inevitability of peace could exist in an era that from 1884 to the end of the century saw the perfection of the repeating rifle, smokeless powder, the machine gun, and the quick-firing artillery piece.(4) Some sense of that progress and regression is present in *The Crown of Life* in a conversation between Piers Otway, an English merchant of Odessa, and Irene Derwent:

“We ought to be rapidly outgrowing warfare; isn’t that the obvious next step in civilization? It seems a commonplace that everyone should look to that end, and strive for it. Yet we are going back – there’s a military reaction – fighting is glorified by everyone who has a loud voice, and in no country more than in England. I wish you could hear a Russian friend of mine speak about it, a rich man who has just given up everything to join the Dukhobortsi. I never knew before what religious passion meant. And it seems to me that this is the world’s

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only hope – peace made a religion. The forms don’t matter; only let the supreme end be peace. It is what people have talked so much about – the religion of the future.” (5)

By allowing Piers Otway to address himself to both sides of the question – to both the possibility of peace and the likelihood of war, Gissing does not do justice to the full force of optimism behind the “question of Peace” he proposed to undertake in the novel, as that optimism existed in the 1890’s. For that feeling we need to turn to Bertha von Suttner’s semi-autobiographical anti-war novel, *Die Waffen Nieder* (*Lay Down your Arms*), which appeared in 1889. Born in 1843, the Harriet Beecher Stowe of the Peace Movement, as Tolstoy considered her, was the daughter of an Austrian lieutenant-field marshall. She nearly served as Alfred Nobel’s secretary in 1876 but marriage to von Suttner changed her plans. She saw Nobel again in 1887 and in 1892 persuaded him to attend the Berne Peace Conference. After publication of her novel, she was active in the Peace Movement and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1905. (6)

The anti-war feeling in *Lay Down Your Arms* is directed at the statesmen and the generals

who are imbued with the spirit of war and the will to fight. The central figure of the novel, Martha von Tilling, is the daughter of a retired Austrian general. Throughout the book runs a debate between father and daughter on the subject of war, the daughter regularly contradicting her father's militarism even to the extraordinary length of urging him to curse war as he lies dying of the cholera brought by invading Prussians. Martha loses her first husband in the Austro-Italian war of 1859. Her second husband, also a career soldier, serves in the Schleswig-Holstein war, the Austro-Prussian war of 1866, and is wrongfully executed as a spy by the Communards, after the Franco-Prussian war. Shouldering her personal losses, Martha then devotes her life to the cause of disarmament and international peace.

It is after her first husband is killed in action that the consciousness of the field marshal's

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daughter undergoes a change. The scales fall off her eyes, and she becomes convinced that peace is not merely the absence of war, as cold is the absence of heat, but a positive state toward which the forces of history and evolution are driving. A reading of Buckle's *History of Civilization in England* assures her that not the march of the soldier but the march of intellect has profoundly affected the evolution of man. As the world progresses, love of war will cool:

“One thing, however, was clear to me even then; that the history of mankind was not decided by, as the old theory taught, kings and statesmen, nor by the wars and treaties that were created by the greed of the former or the cunning of the latter, but by the gradual development of the intellect. The chronicles of courts and battles which are strung together in the history book represent isolated phenomena of the condition of culture at those epochs, not the causes of those conditions. Of the old-fashioned admiration with which other historical writers are accustomed to relate the lives of mighty conquerors and devastators of countries, I could find absolutely nothing in Buckle. On the contrary, he brings proof that the estimation in which the warrior class is held is in inverse ratio to the height of culture which the nation has reached; the lower you go in the barbaric past, the more frequent are the wars of the time, the narrower the limits of peace, province against province, city against city, family against family. He lays stress on the fact that, as society progresses, not only war itself, but the love of war will be found to diminish. That word spoke to my innermost heart.” (7)

Fortified by that revelation, Martha works for peace together with her second husband who is persuaded that the little wars of the continent to which he, as a career officer, has had to muster,

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bloody as they are with the advent of improved weaponry, are merely little eddies in the mainstream of human evolution. Thus the book can end with a Hail to the Future! and a belief in the settlement of international disputes by a court of arbitration. (8)

Gissing's "peace made a religion" would be a welcome evolutionary development. But less hopeful indicators are overwhelming. One of those is the spirit of jingoism and another the arrogance of the press through which the "roaring of the Jingoese" can be heard. Gissing sees the English national character degenerating owing to imperialist attitudes and money worship. Like Shaw at the beginning of the First World War, he sees no difference between Prussian Junkerdom

and English Junkerdom. Comparing England and Germany, one of Gissing's characters expresses his "... fear that our brute, blustering Bismarck may be coming" (*Crown*, p. 180).

Piers Otway's brother Alexander is caricatured as a newspaperman who is a fervent advocate of "England Über Alles," the land to which the whole creation moves. Englishmen are "the top of creation"; other races are "A poor lot! A shabby lot!" Lecturing Piers on the power of English journalism, Alexander boasts, "We English newspapermen have the destiny of the world in our hands. It makes me proud when I think of it. We guard the national honour. Let any confounded foreigner insult England, and he has to reckon with us. A word from us, and it means war, Piers, glorious war, with triumphs for the race and for civilization! England means civilization; the other nations don't count" (*Crown*, p. 51). When Piers, whose cosmopolitanism is an outgrowth of his enterprise in Odessa, objects, his brother accuses him of being a Little Englander who wants to keep England tame, when she must be prepared to fight: "No, no; we must be armed and triple-armed; we must be so strong that not all the confounded foreigners leagued together can touch us. It's the cause of civilization, Piers. I preach it whenever I get the chance.... I stand for England's honour. England's supremacy on sea and land" (*Crown*, pp. 51-52). (9)

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When the next major war breaks out, profit seeking newspapers will be to blame, explains Piers to Irene: "There are newspaper proprietors in every country, who would slaughter half mankind for the pennies of the half who were left, without caring a fraction of a penny whether they had preached war for a truth or a lie." (*Crown*, p. 158). Irene naively states that the press only mirrors public opinion, to which Piers replies, "I'm afraid it manufactures opinion, and stirs up feeling. Consider how very few people know or care anything about most subjects of international quarrel. A mere handful at the noisy center of things who make the quarrel. The business of newspapers in general is to give a show of importance to what has no real importance at all – to prevent the world from living quietly – to arouse bitterness when the natural man would be quite indifferent." (*Crown*, p. 158).

At one point, the subject of war and the press leaves the discussion stage and stirs Gissing's creative impulse. It would almost appear that Gissing takes himself to task for neglecting his craft. Burning as any issue might be, it is the business of the novelist to dramatize social criticism and not use it as the stuff of long conversations verging on the essay.

Piers Otway's father, a mid-nineteenth century radical who names his son after Langland's plowman, left among his papers a satire on both the press and weapons research as instigating agents of war. It is a tale of two Asiatic kingdoms whose long peace was disturbed by the ambitions of their statesmen:

"We are told that a General in the army of Duroba, having a turn for experimental chemistry, had discovered a substance of terrible explosive power, which, by the exercise of further ingenuity, he had adapted for use in warfare. About the same time, a public official in Kalaya, whose duty it was to convey news to the community by means of a primitive system of manuscript placarding,

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hit upon a mechanical method whereby news-sheets could be multiplied very rapidly and be sold to readers all over the kingdom. Now the Duroban General felt eager to test his discovery in a campaign, and, happening to have a quarrel

with a politician in the neighbouring state, did his utmost to excite hostile feeling against Kalaya. On the other hand, the Kalayan official, his cupidity excited by the profits already arising from his invention, desired nothing better than some stirring event which would lead to still greater demand for the news sheets he distributed, and so he also was led to the idea of stirring up international strife. To be brief, these intrigues succeeded only too well; war was actually declared, the armies were mustered and marched to the encounter” (*Crown*, p. 177).

The armies on either side debate the prospect of war by their campfires. The Durobans decide that they do not want to be killed “. . . to please our General with the turn for chemistry” (*Crown*, p. 178). The Kalayans decide that if the statesmen on both sides are as angry as the news sheets relate, then they should fight each other. Thus ended the war. Those responsible for its outbreak were punished in a manner reminiscent of that meted out to criminals in Anthony Burgess’ *Clockwork Orange*: exposure to a surfeit of the simulation of their crimes:

“The Duroban General, having been duly tried for a crime against his country, was imprisoned in a spacious building, the rooms of which were hung with great pictures representing every horror of battle with the ghastliest fidelity; here he was supplied with the materials for chemical experiment, to occupy his leisure, and very shortly, by accident, blew himself to pieces. The Kalayan publicist was also convicted of treason against the state; they banished him to a

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desert island, where for many hours daily he had to multiply copies of his news-sheet – that issue which contained the declaration of war – and at evening burn them all. He presently became imbecile, and so passed away” (*Crown*, p. 178).

The attenuated discussion and the apologue are flaws in the fabric of Gissing’s novel. It would take a Dostoevsky to make a virtue of those elements in fiction. Gissing is at his best when he remains in the province of the novelist by creating a character as the vehicle for an idea. Had Gissing had sufficient inspiration to have made Lee Hannaford a major figure, he would have anticipated in *The Crown of Life* not only the Czar’s proclamation but also “Dr. Strangelove.” Hannaford is a weapons collector of the paramilitary mentality and a student of the chemistry of explosives. We first hear about him indirectly through a conversation between Arnold Jacks, his father John Jacks, and Piers Otway. Arnold Jacks’ moral shallowness is brought to light by his exaltation over the talents of Hannaford, among whose fascinations is a plan to turn Ireland into a military and naval base to be used entirely for that function. Hannaford’s home is a “museum of modern weapons – a regular armoury.” He has invented a new gun and a new explosive. Arnold Jacks believes Hannaford to be a proper son of John Bull: “He showed me, by sketch diagrams, how many men he could kill within a given space.... What would become of us if we left all that kind of thing to the other countries? Hannaford is a patriot. He struck me as quite disinterested; personal gain is nothing to him. He loves his country, and is using his genius in her service” (*Crown*, p. 12). John Jacks contradicts his son who is taken by the novelty of the armaments technologist. The elder Jacks will not tolerate the idea of Hannaford as the new man on the English cultural scene: “. . . we talk very much, and very badly; in pulpit, and Parliament and press. We want the man who has something new to say, and knows how to say it. For my part, I don’t think, when he

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comes, that he will glorify explosives. I want someone to talk about Peace – and *not* from the commercial point of view. The slaughterers shan't have it all their own way . . . civilization will be too strong for them, and if old England doesn't lead in that direction, it will be her shame to the end of history" (*Crown*, p. 13).

A description of Hannaford's inner sanctum offers a glimpse of him as a collector of battlefield relics and accounts for the epithet, grave comedian, given Gissing by Mabel Donnelly. A survey of the artifacts in his room, besides providing an index to his mind, indicates that he is intended not so much as a sinister figure but as a grotesque, a ludicrous demon:

"Mr. Hannaford's sanctum . . . had character; it was hung about with leathal weapons of many kinds and many epochs, including a memento of every important war waged in Europe since the date of Waterloo. A smoke-grimed rifle from some battlefield was in Hannaford's view a thing greatly precious; still more, a bayonet with stain of blood; these relics appealed to his emotions. Under glass were ranged minutiae such as bullets, fragments of shells, bits of gore – drenched cloth or linen, a splinter of human bone – all ticketed with neat inscription. A bookcase contained volumes of military history, works on firearms, treatises on (chiefly explosive) chemistry; several great portfolios were packed with maps and diagrams of warfare. Upstairs, a long garret served as laboratory, and here were ranged less valuable possessions; weapons to which some doubt attached, unbloody scraps of accoutrements, also a few models of cannon and the like" (*Crown*, pp. 15-16).

For a time Hannaford endures the adversity that surrounds every struggling inventor. The English government is slow in coming to terms over an explosive device. Dr. Derwent, who has doubts

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about the inventor's sanity, remarks sardonically that it is a shame ". . . that an honest man who facilitates murder on so great a scale should be kept waiting for his !" (*Crown*, p. 84). Finally he makes his way in the world with a firm of manufacturers of explosives. His expertise is displayed in the newspapers on one occasion when he appraises a fellow inventor's new bullet: "Hannaford, writing with authority, criticised the invention; he gave particulars (the result of an experiment on an old horse) as to its mode of penetrating flesh and shattering bone; there was a gusto in his style, that of the true artist in bloodshed" (*Crown*, p. 202). Such a man who perfects a new gun or a new bullet is held in greater esteem than he who discovers a cure for diphtheria.

Hannaford's relationship with his wife reveals something of his Podsnappery and his near mad Strangelovian inclinations:

"Mrs. Hannaford was something of an artist; her husband spoke of all art with contempt – except the great art of human slaughter. She liked the society of foreigners; he, though a remarkable linguist, at heart, distrusted and despised all but English speaking folk. As a girl in her teens, she had been charmed by the man's virile accomplishments, his soldierly bearing and gay talk of martial things, though Hannaford was only a teacher of science. Nowadays she thought

with dreary wonder of that fascination, and had come to loathe every trapping and habiliment of war. She knew him to be profoundly selfish, and recognized the other faults which hindered so clever a man from success in life; indolent habits, moral untrustworthiness, and a conceit which at times menaced insanity” (*Crown*, p. 16).

In Hannaford, too, a curious sexlessness, perhaps impotence, accompanies his dreams of destruction,

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a pathological combination popularly ascribed to Adolph Hitler although Hitler was said to be lavishly courtly in his attentions to women in public: “Indeed he was not fond of the society of women, and grew less so every year. His tone with regard to them was marked with an almost puritanical coldness; he visited any feminine breach of the proprieties with angry censure. His morality, in fact, no one doubted; the suspicions Mrs. Hannaford had once entertained when his coldness to her began, she now knew to be baseless. Absorbed in meditations upon bloodshed and havoc, he held high the idea of chastity and, in company agreeable to him, could allude to it as the safeguard of civil life” (*Crown*, p. 31).

The interesting dramatic potential of Hannaford is never fully realized. His occupation aside, we would like to know more about this Satanic man while we are treated to more than we need to know about the tepidly genteel major figures in the novel. Hannaford’s part is peripheral to the plot which moves toward the eventual happiness of Piers Otway and Irene Derwent. When Hannaford appears it is generally to make himself disagreeable to his wife who is the aunt of Miss Derwent. As Gissing presents him, he is a caricature who moves in and out of the story eliciting hisses of “cad” and “villain.” Beyond the plot, however, Hannaford has a symbolic function. He represents the spirit of those last fifteen years of the nineteenth century which witnessed the development in quick succession of rapid firing weaponry utilizing more powerful and efficient “propellants.” (10) Regarded in that way, the figure of the armaments technologist becomes sinister. Though not clandestinely active promoting wars as his employers were later said to be, he and his co-workers in various countries, by virtue of human ingenuity, escalated technological progress in armaments, the progress of which the twentieth century has not seen the end.

Viewed in terms of the theme Gissing emphasized in his letters, *The Crown of Life* is only a partial success. As an “Anti-jingo book” taking up the “question of Peace,” the novel falls short of

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an imaginative rendering of that theme. The “question of Peace” is not the imaginative center of *The Crown of Life* as it is in the “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” of the international Peace Movement, von Suttner’s *Lay Down Your Arms*. Love is the “crown of life” as is seen from Gissing’s focus upon the story of Piers and Irene. The issues of peace, jingo-journalism, and England’s aggressiveness are laid before the reader through the medium of conversation between characters. Realizing that intellectual discussion is not dramatic presentation, Gissing attempts to remedy that failure of art with the inclusion of short satiric tales of warmongering in imaginary lands. By creating the character of the arms technologist, however, Gissing succeeds in dramatizing a distinctive aspect of his age. Viewed as an allegory of the development of modern technology of destruction, *The Crown of Life* transcends the limitations imposed upon it by Gissing’s all too evident compulsion to tell a conventional love story.

- 1 - Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War: 1890-1914* (New York: Bantam Matrix, 1970), p. 266.
- 2 - Tuchman, *Proud Tower*, p. 266.
- 3 - *The Letters of George Gissing to Eduard Bertz: 1887-1903*, ed. A. C. Young (London: Constable, 1961), pp. 251, 254-55; *George Gissing and H.G. Wells: Their Friendship and Correspondence*, ed. Royal A. Gettmann (London: Hart-Davis, 1961), p. 131.
- 4 - J. F. C. Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789-1961: A Study of the Impact of the French, Industrial, and Russian Revolutions on War and Its Conduct* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 134-35. The rapid developments in military technology fascinated Ford Madox Ford's Mr. Sorrell. Foremost among the modern fruits of industry which he would like to take back to the

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Middle Ages is the machine gun: "Above all, the machine gun." *Ladies Whose Bright Eyes: A Romance* (London: Constable, 1911), p. 10.

- 5 - *The Crown of Life* (London: Methuen, 1899), p. 289.
- 6 - T. W. MacCallum and Stephen Taylor, *The Nobel Prize Winners and the Nobel Foundation, 1901-1937* (Zurich: Central European Times Publishing Co., 1938), pp. 329, 338.

At the Hague Peace Conference in 1898, Count Munster of Berlin regarded Baroness von Suttner as working for Russia: "The Conference," he wrote home in disgust, "has brought here the political ruffraff of the entire world, journalists of the worst type ... and female peace fanatics like Madame de Suttner, who yesterday again entertained the Russian delegation at a large banquet.... All this rabble... are working in the open under the aegis of Russia." Quoted in Elie Halévy, *Imperialism and the Rise of Labour (1895-1905)*, vol. V of *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. E. I. Watkin (London: Benn, 1961), pp. 64-65.

- 7 - *Lay down your Arms (Die Waffen Nieder): The Autobiography of Martha von Tilling* (1889), trans. T. E. Holmes (London: Longmans, 1892), pp. 47-48.
- 8 - An anti-peace movement argument is worth noting here by way of contrast. Especially telling is the likeness pointed up between the operations of modern large industry and modern military strategy: Colonel F. N. Maude, who believed that "what Darwin accomplished for Biology generally, Clausewitz did for the Life History of Nations nearly half a century before him," was the editor of the 1903 English edition of Clausewitz's *On War*. As a military man he was predictably reluctant to see nations give up military advantage, particularly that of surprise,

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which would be lost by a declaration of intentions. He seems to have been delighted by the irony of Andrew Carnegie working for world peace:

"Yet there are politicians in England so grossly ignorant of the German reading of the Napoleonic lessons that they expect that Nation to sacrifice the enormous advantage they have prepared by a whole century of self-sacrifice and practical patriotism by an appeal to a Court of Arbitration, and the further delays which must arise by going through the medieval formalities of recalling Ambassadors and exchanging ultimatums.

Most of our present-day politicians have made their money in business – a 'form of human competition greatly resembling War,' to paraphrase Clausewitz.

Did they, when in the throes of such competition, send formal notice to their rivals of their plans to get the better of them in commerce? Did Mr. Carnegie, the archpriest of Peace at any price, when he built up the Steel Trust, notify his competitors when and how he proposed to strike the blows which successively made him master of millions? Surely the Directors of a Great Nation may consider the interests of their shareholders – i.e. the people they govern – as sufficiently serious not to be endangered by the deliberate sacrifice of the preponderant position of readiness which generations of self-devotion, patriotism and wise forethought have won for them?”

“Introduction,” *On War* (1832) by Karl von Clausewitz, trans. Col. J. J. Graham, ed. with introduction, Col. F. N. Maude (1908; rept. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968), I, v. x.

9 - George Orwell’s observation during the Spanish Civil War typifies the usual contempt which the combatant holds for the jingo journalist who urges others to fight: “The people who write that

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kind of stuff never fight; possibly they believe that to write it is a substitute for fighting. It is the same in all wars; the soldiers do the fighting, the journalists do the shouting, and no true patriot ever gets near a front-line trench, except on the briefest of propaganda tours. Sometimes it is a comfort to me to think that the aeroplane is altering the conditions of war. Perhaps when the next great war comes, we may see that sight unprecedented in all history, a jingo with a bullet-hole in him.” *Homage to Catalonia* (1938; Boston: Beacon, 1955), p. 66.

10 - “. . . propellants – it was the industry’s way of speaking of the various kinds of powder,” explains Lanny Budd’s father to his son. The elder Budd was “head salesman of the Budd Gunmakers Corporation” in the first of Upton Sinclair’s Lanny Budd novels which is in part an exposé of the private armaments industry’s promotional activities just prior to the First World War. *World’s End* (New York: Literary Guild, 1940), p. 32.

If we were to cast about for a model for Hannaford the inventor, it might be Hiram Maxim, although the parallel cannot be pressed very far. Maxim (1840-1916), who invented the automatic machine gun, formed the Maxim Gun Works in 1884. His gun was adopted by the British Army in 1889 and by the Navy in 1892. The gun works became part of Vickers in 1896. Calling himself a “chronic inventor” and having a variety of inventions to his credit, Maxim was very proud of his gun’s superiority in the field to other similar weapons. Gissing might have read about Maxim’s work in the newspapers just as readers of *The Crown of Life* read

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about Hannaford’s. One biographical detail that Maxim and Hannaford share is that they are both naturalized English citizens. That Hannaford was taken from life suggests itself because of details about him that call attention to themselves yet serve no functional purpose in the novel.

* * * * *

Thomas Seccombe Writes the Gissing Entry in the *D.N.B.*
(concluded)

Pierre Coustillas

Delicacy prevented Seccombe from mentioning in his correspondence with the writer's relatives the crucial episode in Gissing's life that had brought his student days to an abrupt close. As noted before, Seccombe had certainly heard, while a lecturer at Owens, the story of Gissing's expulsion – the Senate still numbered men like T. N. Toller and A. S. Wilkins, who had taught Gissing in the 1870's. There was, however, a third member of the staff, Adolphus W. Ward, who had also known Gissing well, if not better. Ward had succeeded J. G. Greenwood in 1889 as Principal of the College and had been elected Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge in 1900. To him also Seccombe passed on the proof of his article, and his corrections and comments can easily be distinguished from those of Algernon Gissing as they were made in a much thicker hand. He disliked the reference to George's "intellectual arrogance" at college and substituted "masterfulness" for the latter word. He similarly substituted "his amorous temperament" for "amorous propensities," and crossed out the last clause in the following sentence: "His career at Owens broke off in disgrace, and his pride cut him adrift and made a temporary pariah of him." Here Ward remarked in square brackets: "He was never treated as such by some," a fact which is

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confirmed by the subscription organised by the staff of the College on young Gissing's behalf after he had served his term of imprisonment in the summer of 1876. The end of the same sentence, with the reference to his health being temporarily "impaired by 'insane' overwork at College," did not satisfy Ward either. "By excitement and overwork" was the phrase he suggested, with this remark in square brackets: "I suppose 'insane' is a quotation, but I have no reason to suppose he overworked insanely. With the excitement referred to above any hard work would have unhinged a man." Lower down he cancelled "Herr" before "Edward Bertz", and underlined "got rid of" in the phrase "He had now got rid of his first wife," instead of which Seccombe wrote: "Gissing's first wife was now dead." And the latter was indeed the only point that was ultimately amended as Ward had wished. The other suggestions were disregarded altogether.

His letter to Seccombe is on note-paper headed "Peterhouse Lodge, | Cambridge":

June 19th 1912

Dear Mr. Seccombe,

Thank you very much; I can now arrange about the bibliography.

I return the Gissing article with many thanks. Parts of it are new to me; my only anxiety was that there should be nothing inaccurate about his Manchester life and troubles. "Serious trouble" is sufficient on this head. You have no idea (and you will not suppose for a moment that I am speaking of myself, for I am not) how much kindness was shown to him after the collapse, and it might pain some survivors that an impression shd remain that he was treated as a pariah.

Believe me, Yours very sincerely
A. W. Ward

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When objecting to the consequences of the Owens episode on Gissing's life and stressing

the assistance he was given, Ward doubtless had in mind the steps that were being taken currently at Manchester to create a George Gissing memorial which eventually took the form of a Gissing scholarship. (14) There was at the time a revival of interest in the works partly ascribable to the reissue by Sidgwick & Jackson in 1911 of eight of the novels. The anonymous front-page article by Virginia Woolf in the *Times Literary Supplement* (15) was the first of a series largely prompted by the quasi-simultaneous publication of Morley Robert's fictionalized life of Gissing, *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*, and of Frank Swinnerton's critical study.

Swinnerton's letter to Seccombe of August 18, 1912 (see Section V) shows that the typescript of the *D.N.B.* article was longer than the printed version. An editorial note in (Sir) Sidney Lee's hand at the top of the article confirms this: "Sorry that the *D.N.B.* does not admit character sketches or full criticism | ed." It is also interesting to record that the proof differs from the article on a number of points which were apparently questioned neither by the novelist's relatives nor by Adolphus W. Ward. Here is a list of these points:

- (1) "born in the High Street: born in the Market Place." Westgate would have been more correct.
 - (2) "a family of (blank) sons and (blank) daughters."
 - (3) "and Thiselton Dyer : and other botanists."
 - (4) "A younger brother, Algernon enjoys some reputation as a novelist." This is not on the proof.
 - (5) "For the eight or nine years that followed his disappearance from Manchester: For eight or nine years after...."
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- (6) "Boxed the compass of opinion like his own Godfrey Peak (in *Born in Exile*), and for a time was on the eve of becoming a catholic: and boxed... (in *Born in Exile*)" The suggestion that Gissing at one time thought of becoming a Catholic is a startling one, as there is abundant evidence of his hostility to Roman Catholicism throughout his life.
 - (7) "neglecting the chance of obtaining further pupils and cultivating the conception of himself as a social outlaw: pupils and of contributing to the 'Fortnightly' and cultivating...." The offer to contribute to the *Fortnightly Review* came from John Morley through Frederic Harrison.
 - (8) "'The Unclassed' of 1884: "'The Unclassed' (1884; new edit. 1895)."
 - (9) "'Demos' brought him an advance of fifty pounds: ... brought him 100 l."
 - (10) "On his return he put 'The Emancipated' (1890) aside and wrote 'A Life's Morning' (1888): ... 'The Emancipated' for a time aside and wrote for serial publication in the 'Cornhill' 'A Life's Morning' (1888)." Both versions are wrong: *The Emancipated* was not put aside, but quite normally published by Bentley some months after its composition; *A Life's Morning* was written in the autumn of 1885 (not with a view to serialization in the *Cornhill*), promptly accepted by James Payn, but laid aside until 1888 when it appeared both as a serial and in three-volume form.

- (11) “the title of ‘Spokesman of Despair’: Gissing’s title as the ‘spokesman of despair.’” (16)
- (12) “to live away from London – at Exeter, Dorking and elsewhere.” The extension was cancelled.
- (13) “Deuzil (*sic*) Quarrier’ (1892), completed at Dorking, where he met George Meredith: ‘Denzil Quarrier’ (1892; new edit. 1907), which he completed at Dorking, where he met George

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Meredith.” *Denzil Quarrier* was written at Exeter in the autumn of 1891; no new edition of the book was published in 1907; Gissing was an occasional visitor at Box Hill in the years 1895-99.

- (14) The new edition of *The Odd Women* (Nelson, 1907) is not mentioned on the proof. The book, originally described as “an application of artistic intuition to the problem of three luckless and moneyless women,” was ultimately said to be an “artistic study of three luckless and moneyless women.”
- (15) The 1902 edition of *Charles Dickens* is not listed on the proof.
- (16) “Dickens, whom he had worshipped from youth, as a national novelist-hero: ... youth.”
- (17) “spent much time in southern England: ... at Budleigh and at Epsom.” The addition was not very felicitous – Gissing stayed only about three years at Epsom (1894-97) and a few months (mid-February to late May 1897) at Budleigh Salterton.
- (18) The date of *By the Ionian Sea*, 1901, was added in the definitive version.
- (19) *Veranilda* was at first described as “the most deliberate and ambitious of his works.”
- (20) “The state of his lungs rendered it desirable for him to go south. At the close of 1901 he moved from Paris to Arcachon: ... to go south at the close of 1901. Moving...” The change was a happy factual correction; not so St-Jean-Pied-de-Port which was erroneously altered to St. Jean-Pied-du-Port.
- (21) “With a foreword by Mr. Frederic Harrison” is not on the proof.
- (22) “His extraordinary power of intensifying the misery of the world’s finer spirits among ‘the herd that feed and breed’: spirits who are thrown among...”

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- (23) *Our Friend the Charlatan* was eliminated at proof stage from the list of works not previously enumerated. With scant critical acumen, Seccombe had called the novel “his poorest.”
- (24) The MSS were originally said to have passed to “his brother and sister, Algernon and Ellen.” The bibliography also suffered a few corrections, but inconsistencies and errors remained.

The three letters of Frank Swinnerton confirm a fact that he himself confessed, namely that he wrote his volume on Gissing very quickly. So did Morley Roberts, unmentioned in this correspondence. The two men were competing and produced books which smacked of haste and are now of hardly more than historical interest. In after years Swinnerton was to recount the circumstances under which he came to write his critical study of Gissing – in his *Autobiography* (1936) and *Background with Chorus* (1956) for instance. Here is his first letter to Seccombe:

9 Victoria Cottages,
Archway Road, Highgate, N.

June 21st 1912

Dear Sir,

Mr. Martin Secker has asked me to write, for a series he publishes, a critical study of the work of George Gissing. I do not expect you know my name, but I have published three novels (17) – mostly about the lower-middle-class; and Messrs. Methuen are issuing a fourth in the late summer. The Gissing book is to have a single chapter containing a very short biographical sketch: it is otherwise purely critical. Naturally, I have read more than once your introduction to “The House of

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Cobwebs,” and this seems to me so excellent and so exhaustive that it appears inevitable that any writer on Gissing should be tempted to avail himself of some of the hints conveyed in references to published articles, autobiographical fragments, etc. Do you object to this? My book will be a study of the works, and I shall in any case be bound to make some allusion to your preface ; but I should like to be quite sure that you would not regard my following up some of your notes as an impertinence.

You, no doubt, are writing the DNB article on Gissing, but of course this will be biographical, whereas the book I am doing is really purely critical. I hope you will excuse me for troubling you with this letter. I don’t write with the idea of getting any fresh information, although naturally I want all that is to be had: my idea is simply to advise you of what is being done, and either to obtain your sympathy or to receive from you a note limiting the use which you would desire me to make of the information contained in your essay.

With compliments, I am,
Yours very truly

Frank Swinnerton

Thomas Seccombe Esq.

Swinnerton provides in *Background with Chorus* (p. 132) a link between the first two letters: “For the first time I met eager cordiality, and an invitation to dinner in a district known as Acton, which to me was as remote as the Bahamas.”

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9, Victoria Cottages,

Archway Road,
Highgate, N.

June 26th, 1912

Dear Sir,

Your letter is most awfully kind, and I should indeed be very grateful for the sight of the Dictionary article. So, would you, when it is convenient for you to see me, very kindly let me have a postcard? I would keep any appointment, and should keenly appreciate the chance of a talk with you about Gissing. I already know that it is necessary to be circumspect in regard to Gissing's life; and I am leaving the chapter dealing with this until after I have seen you. I should then be very willing (if you were) to submit it for your reading.

The article in 'Literature' is a page by Morley Roberts, not, I should have thought, very exactly critical, but enthusiastic; and it appeared as a 'Literature Portrait' in the issue for July 20, 1901. I am very glad to be able to send you this information.

Thanking you again for writing so kindly and generously, I am,

Yours very truly,

Frank Swinnerton

Thomas Seccombe Esq.

At Seccombe's house, he met George Whale, "a rosy character of tremendous charm," who had known Gissing well, had corresponded with him until his death, and had been entrusted with his last will and testament. "I found as a result of a charmed evening," says Swinnerton, "that I had discovered more of Gissing than Seccombe knew." (18) "Very generous," he styled him in his

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Autobiography (p. 147), a "genial lecturer and journalist and historian" in *The Georgian Literary Scene*. (19) The biographical chapter was submitted as promised and Seccombe replied: "I think you are absolutely on the right track, and have shown great insight in its discovery." (20) In turn Swinnerton wrote:

9 Victoria Cottages,
Archway Road, Highgate, N.

August 18th, 1912

Dear Mr. Seccombe,

Thank you very much for your letter. It is a tremendous relief to me to find that you approve the chapter. I note what you say about the first section and about Squire Western; and will revise. I really am *very* elated by what you say, as of course I've been working in the dark,

Also, many thanks for the original MS of your Dictionary article, which I return herewith. I am very glad to have seen this, and wish it might have been printed in its entirety. I hope you really will think seriously of the Meredith *book*; I think young Meredith would probably be glad for

Constable to do it.

Thank you for Mr. Whale's address, and for your kind wishes.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Frank Swinnerton

Thomas Seccombe Esq.

When Swinnerton's critical study of Gissing came out in October, Seccombe did not like it, and he said so at length and in fairly strong language in the *New York Times Review of Books* of December 8, 1912, (21) calling it "an able deprecation." "How many novelists are there," he asked angrily, "whose mere writing gives so much delight as that of Gissing? How many masters of

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fiction are there the corpus of whose fiction would stand the ordeal of selection so well? The mere fact that after an interval of so many years books are written about Gissing and that his novels are continuously appearing in cheap editions seems to me a fairly satisfactory counterblast to Mr. Swinnerton's cold fits." The young critic replied in a long piece a month later in the same journal, (22) and he wrote to Seccombe who had obviously been offended by his brash and not too subtle criticism of Gissing's work. "It seemed possible," Swinnerton confessed years later, "that Seccombe felt I had appeared in Acton as a lamb, disguising the fact that I was something less pleasant. I made anxious enquiry; he returned no answer." (23)

VI

Among Seccombe's literary friends was a member of the firm of Smith, Elder & Co., which was on the decline in 1912 and soon to be absorbed by John Murray. Besides the commonplace observation that literary London is a comparatively small place, it is easy enough to account for this connection of Seccombe with Smith, Elder – the *D.N.B.* was a Smith, Elder publication and Seccombe as assistant editor in the last decade of the nineteenth century was naturally brought in touch with men like George Smith, James Payn and the senior members of the staff. The two following copies (in different hands) of letters from Gissing to Payn may have come to Seccombe straight from Payn's widow or from either of her two sons, or from that anonymous friend who described the MS of *Thyrza* for him when he was writing his introductory survey in the winter of 1905-06: "I well remember the appearance of the MS Gissing wrote then on thin foreign paper in a small, thin handwriting, without correction. It was before the days of typewriting, and the MS. of a three-volume novel was so compressed that one could literally put it in one's pocket without the slightest inconvenience." (24)

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Each of these two letters is important in its own way, not only because the originals are not available, but because they show Gissing in two very difficult phases of his relations with Payn. And Payn, be it remembered, has come to be regarded in Gissing criticism as a pretentious ass and a harmful one at that – that man who obliged Gissing to alter the ending of "Emily" (retitled *A Life's Morning*), and to lead the resuscitated heroine to the altar. In November 1885 he had accepted the

story for publication in volume form, but he had half promised to serialize it first in the *Cornhill*. Two years later, about November 4, 1887, Gissing heard from him that his old novel, which had lain dormant in the files of Smith, Elder, would be serialized after all, but that a better title was needed. The author suggested “Her Will and Her Way,” only to find that it had been used, then “The Morning of Her Life,” and about November 13, *A Life’s Morning*. At what stage Payn demanded a happy ending has long been a matter for conjecture since Gissing kept this from his family, but the first of the two letters reproduced here seems to indicate that he revised his story as the printers were setting up the twelve instalments. The quiet tone of the letter, if one overlooks the “ludicrous misprint” (a thing which at any time in his career made him furious), contrasts with the account given by Morley Roberts of his friend being driven mad by the prospect of having to revise his novel. (25) But the letter is of importance because it is the only one from Gissing that confirms – at least partly, since the ending is unfortunately not referred to here – the story of the novel’s revision for which Roberts was hitherto the sole authority. If Roberts is to be trusted, only the last three chapters had to be entirely rewritten, and Gissing may have turned to this most uncongenial task sometime between November 1887 and late February 1888. It is a pity that the location of the MS of this novel is unknown and no trace of a sale can be found,

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7.K Cornwall Residences
NW.
Nov. 25th 1887 (26)

Dear Mr. Payn,

The phrase is an affected one; I ought to have altered it, as I have now done. I was given to such things just at that time.

This is not, I trust, a revise, for I see that a ludicrous misprint just above stands uncorrected.

I will certainly avoid alteration save when there is something really painful. It is not likely there will be many such instances when the story gets well going.

I thank you for your good opinion of my style in general.

Yours very truly,

George Gissing

VII

The second letter to James Payn deals with the negotiations about “Godwin Peak,” later retitled *Born in Exile*. The novel had been completed on July 17, 1891 at Clevedon, and the MS sent to Smith, Elder three days later. Encouraged by the success of *New Grub Street*, his only three-volume novel to run into a second edition in that form, he asked £250 for the entire copyright, i.e. £100 more than he had received for *New Grub Street*. On August 7, Gissing’s diary reads: “an illegible letter from Payn, in which I understand him to say that the reading of my MS will be suspended for a month by his holiday. He goes on to inform me that S[mith] and E[lder] cannot possibly give £250, seeing that ‘New Grub Street’ was a financial failure! – I replied, saying that if even that sum is contingent upon his opinion when he has finished the MS, I must withdraw and go

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elsewhere.” (27) The same day he heard that *New Grub Street* had been published by Tauchnitz on the Continent, which cast serious doubt upon Payn’s statement that the book had been a failure. How much Tauchnitz paid for the right to reprint the story is not known, but it may be assumed that he did not pay less than for *Demos* – £20. Furthermore it is relevant to recall that the book went through a number of new editions in one-volume form under the Smith, Elder imprint in subsequent years – 1891 (six shillings), 1892 (2s.6d and 2s.), 1893 (2s.6d and 2s.), 1904 (2s.6d) and 1908 (2s.6d).

24 Prospect Park,
Exeter

Aug. 7. 1891

Dear Mr. Payn,

I must not argue the point of price, for I know nothing of the conditions which determine it, but it seems to me a most astonishing thing that a book from my hand at the present day should be worth only fifty pounds more than “*Demos*” some years ago.

By reserving the American copyright I gain nothing, for it is not in my power to conduct the business necessary for disposing of that right; whereas I should have thought that Messrs. Smith & Elder could, in the ordinary course of business relations, have disposed of the book in America for payment not altogether insignificant – payment which would at all events have increased the sum hitherto offered to the author.

However, I must reply to the statements of your letter.

Is my chance of receiving £150 (even) dependent upon your opinion of the book when you have finished its perusal? If so – if it is *possible* that in, say, two months’ time a sum less than £150 may be offered me, then I fear I have no option, and must needs withdraw the MS at once. This I am

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sure you will understand; with very little delay I could get that sum for the novel. On the other hand, if Messrs. Smith & Elder will purchase “*Godwin Peak*” for £150 – well, I shall accept it. Such a necessity amazes me; I could not have foreseen it, and am only reconciled to it by your statements that “*New Grub Street*” has been a financial failure.

All this is very informal; I write to you as one man of letters to another. And to pursue the same tone I will add that, after this, it will no doubt be better for me to put my affairs into the hands of Watt, or some such man. I should then reap the odds and ends of profit which I must now perforce neglect. I am not set on making money, but I must not forget that only with the help of money can one’s artistic powers be developed.

Will you, then, kindly let me know whether Messrs. Smith Elder will give £150 for this book? If that is to be uncertain even for a month’s time, I have absolutely no choice but to write for the MS. Possibly I ought not to give you the trouble of answering this question; if you had rather I wrote to the firm about it, please let me have a note to that effect.

I am

Yours very truly,
George Gissing

On August 9, he received his MS and a letter from Payn, saying that if Gissing liked to send it back in a month's time, he would then finish it, but that he could not advise Smith, Elder to offer more than £150. Pessimism, Payn observed, was the cause of Gissing's unpopularity. Gissing's reply, the original of which is in the collection of C. C. Kohler, was published in the *Gissing Newsletter* for July 1971, pp. 14-16. "To alter with deliberation the whole spirit of my work," it reads in part, "would be to court and merit failure. I take no credit to myself for preferring present

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poverty to the certainty of a hopeless future if I tried to write otherwise. The continental novelists have gained their public by persistence in self-development. I must try to win the same end by the same course."

Forthwith he sent his MS to A. P. Watt, the literary agent, and it was ultimately published by A. & C. Black in May 1892. After his reputation had taken a significant leap forward in the mid-nineties, Smith, Elder tried to win him back with an offer to write for them a one-volume novel, but he turned a deaf ear. So ended his relations with publishers who, as the records available testify, exploited him and attempted to make him debase his art with commercial ends in view. Time has clarified the question at issue.

VIII

Seccombe did not choose to use these letters, however indirectly. This is but one instance among others of knowledge of Gissing's affairs that he did not turn to account. One sentence in his *D.N.B.* article is pregnant with vivid recollections: "His correspondence ... with.... Edward Bertz ... forms an autobiographical document of extraordinary impressiveness and candour." Seccombe had read the whole batch, a large portion of which was afterwards to be destroyed by Bertz out of loyalty to Gissing's memory. W. H. Hudson, a friend of Gissing's and of Seccombe's, gave an account of these letters to Morley Roberts in a letter of September 15, 1907: "There are many enough to make a good book – tremendously long and very intimate, containing a full minute history of the whole miserable affair of the first marriage." (28) One last instance of unused knowledge is obvious enough if one recalls that Seccombe helped A. H. Bullen – Gissing's main publisher from 1892 to 1897 – to edit the *Gentleman's Magazine* after it was bought and revived by Alfred Harmsworth. It was in the February 1906 issue of this journal that appeared the anonymous article by Noel Ainslie which is so full of personal details about Gissing's early life, especially the

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American year. Seccombe must therefore have been acquainted with that mysterious person Noel Ainslie (author of three novels and three pieces on Gissing), (29) who has hitherto baffled all attempts at identification, and upon whose memories he could have drawn extensively.

All in all, it was therefore quite natural that Seccombe should be regarded in the pre-1914 period as an authority on Gissing. Whatever disadvantage he was at compared with present-day scholars, his position in some respects was genuinely superior. He had had at his disposal some valuable information which is now irretrievably lost.

14 - "A Memorial to George Gissing", *The Times*, March 5, 1913, p. 11. See also the *Manchester Guardian*, March 5, p. 6 ("A Manchester Memorial to George Gissing": a leader); p. 7, ("A Memorial to George Gissing. Proposal to Found a Scholarship"); p. 14 ("George Gissing," by

A. C. Benson).

- 15 - "The Novels of George Gissing," January 11, 1912, pp. 9-10. Reprinted in *Gissing: the Critical Heritage*, pp. 529-34.
- 16 - Title of an article by Jane H. Findlater in the *National Review*, November 1904, pp. 511-22. Reprinted in *Gissing: the Critical Heritage*, pp. 456-66.
- 17 - *The Merry Heart* (1909), *The Young Idea* (1910) and *The Casement* (1911). *The Happy Family* appeared in the Autumn of 1912.
- 18 - *Background with Chorus*, p. 132.
- 19 - Radius Books/Hutchinson, 1969, p. 182.
- 20 - *Background with Chorus*, p. 134.
- 21 - "Gissing: a Sentiment. – The last representative of transition from the old miscellany novel to the self-acting novel of today," pp. 753-54.

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- 22 - "Critic of Gissing – Lack of sympathy displaces him from the first rank," *The New York Times Review of Books*, January 12, 1913, p. 11.
- 23 - *Background with Chorus*, p. 134.
- 24 - *The House of Cobwebs*, p. XVIII, n. 2.
- 25 - *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*, ch. IV.
- 26 - This letter is marked "copy" in the top left-hand corner in the same handwriting as the letter dated August 7, 1891 which also has the word "copy" in the top left-hand corner.
- 27 - Diary (Berg Collection).
- 28 - W. H. Hudson, *Men, Books and Birds*, London, Nash & Grayson, 1925, p. 90. What remained of Gissing's letters to Bertz were edited by A. C. Young (Rutgers University Press: Constable, 1961).
- 29 - The novels are *Among Thorns* (Lawrence & Bullen, 1896), *An Erring Pilgrimage* (Lawrence & Bullen, 1898) and *The Salvation Seekers* (Methuen, 1901). – The first piece on Gissing is a letter to the editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, December 31, 1903, p. 3. The other two are the Recollections in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (pp. 11-18) and a review of *The House of Cobwebs* in the same journal, June 1906, pp. 527-31.

Gissing's Birthday

Sandra Solotaroff Enzer

On November 20, 1977 Shirley and Alfred Slotnick of Brooklyn N. Y. brought together a number of dedicated Gissingites to commemorate the one-hundred-twentieth anniversary of the author's birth. In the past four years Mr. Slotnick has amassed an extraordinary collection including

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four hundred copies of works by Gissing, many of them first editions, an equal number of volumes containing critical or casual references to him, and several Gissing holographs and drawings. One of the most interesting items is the author's childhood copy of a medieval drawing, "The Alchemist in Distress," which demonstrates not only the boy's remarkable artistic skill and eye for fine detail, but

also what must have been unusual discipline and patience in one so young. In *Workers in the Dawn* this very drawing is copied by the young Arthur Golding during his apprenticeship to Mr. Tollady.

The afternoon was enhanced by the Slotnicks' gracious hospitality as the guests leafed through the volumes, occasionally exclaiming with delight as some rare find came to hand. A golden autumnal sun shining on the tightly packed bookshelves imbued the scene with a Ryecroftian mellowness, bringing to mind not only Ryecroft's comment on his home library, "when I place a new volume on my shelves, I say: Stand there whilst I have eyes to see you; and a joyous tremor fills me," but also the reminder that Gissing himself longed in vain for such a sanctuary. In 1903 he wrote from France to thank Edward Clodd for pictures of the latter's home:

Bookshelves in the hall are delightfully suggestive of all good things. The one thing I greatly envy any man is the possession of a home, I have never had one since I was a boy, and now, I fear, never shall.

Considering the richness of the Slotnicks' collection in its tranquilly domestic setting and the enthusiastic response of the assembled company towards Gissing's work, one imagines he would have been very much at home that recent Sunday in Brooklyn.

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Book Reviews

George Gissing: *In the Year of Jubilee* (The Harvester Press, Hassocks, 1976). With an introduction by Gillian Tindall and textual notes by P. F. Kropholler.

In the Year of Jubilee is one of those Gissing novels whose fate and fame might be termed middling. It does not, like *New Grub Street*, or *Demos*, rank with the titles that readily come to the pen of reviewers and historians of literature; nor has it suffered the almost complete critical oblivion into which such books as *The Paying Guest* or *The Town Traveller* have fallen. It belongs, alongside of *The Emancipated* and *The Whirlpool*, to an intermediate category of books which are rated fairly high in the Gissing corpus, yet have never been called his masterpieces. Perhaps it is significant that no translation of it is on record. René Fleury – Gabrielle's brother – did translate it, and its publication in French was announced on one or two occasions before the first World War. Yet all that remains of his efforts is an apparently unique copy of the typescript, with neat hand-made corrections and a fictitious translator's name on the title-page which shows that the Fleurys, brother and sister, were shy of seeing their name in print. No edition has appeared in England since 1947 and the book has become scarce. The present edition, printed from the first one-volume edition by Lawrence & Bullen (1895), is therefore most welcome. It is so on at least three scores—because it answers a genuine need, because it is capably edited, and because it signifies one more step on the way to a collected edition of Gissing's books.

In her introduction, Gillian Tindall discusses the relationship between Gissing's domestic difficulties in the early nineties and this story of suburban life; she also examines the powerful sociological interest of the narrative as a picture of suburban mores, whether women or education or housing or publicity are concerned. She is certainly right when she remarks that "it was not by

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chance that the author changed his work title 'Miss Lord' to *In the Year of Jubilee*. It is the England of the Jubilee period (actually 1887) that is being portrayed, the final, most brash era of the whole progress-orientated, commercially-minded Victorian reign." The book links up naturally with the previous and following full-length stories, *The Odd Women* (1893) and *The Whirlpool* (1897) in that it deals brilliantly with the New Woman, at a time when this type of person was invading not only the novel, but English homes. It may also be seen in this respect as the mother-planet around which revolve a number of short stories which Gissing published in the magazines. Gillian Tindall mentions "The Honeymoon," but others could be added, for instance "The Tyrant's Apology," "A Daughter of the Lodge," and "Miss Rodney's Leisure." Some of the themes of the novel, like commercialism and the searing effect of conventions, continued to preoccupy Gissing, and they found their way into his very last novel of modern life, *Will Warburton* (1905).

The notes to the text supplied by Piet Kropholler are an excellent example of the loving care with which he has been reading and rereading Gissing's novels for years. Not only does he trace all literary allusions to their sources, but he invites the reader to turn to this or that passage in another novel or in *Ryecroft* or in the writer's *Commonplace-Book*. Had the diary been at his disposal, he would have been tempted to make other pertinent *rapprochements* – thus, to mention only the most insignificant of them, it appears that Gatti's (p. 10) was a restaurant patronized by Gissing shortly before he wrote *In the Year of Jubilee*.

To sum up, the present volume is a highly satisfactory production from the Harvester Press. With its aptly chosen jacket it is one of the eight titles so far reprinted. It will soon be one of fourteen since *The Whirlpool* and *The Emancipated* are on the point of publication; *The Crown of*

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Life, *Denzil Quarrier* and *Born in Exile* are ready to be printed and *Will Warburton* is being edited by Colin Partridge, co-editor of *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*. – P. Coustillas.

Henry Clarke, *Drawings of Wakefield* (Wakefield Historical Society, 1977), £3.70 in paperback, including postage, from Richard Knowles, 30, Newland Court, Wakefield.

Memories of Merry Wakefield by Henry Clarkson was published in 1887 when the author was in his eighties and it tells of Wakefield in the earlier years of the century – it is one of my favourite books. Shortly afterwards Henry Clarke drew ninety-seven illustrations of scenes mentioned in that book and had them bound into his own copy. The drawings were unknown until the finely bound book was bequeathed to Wakefield Public Library about twenty years ago. Now the Wakefield Historical Society has published the drawings as a separate volume with an introduction by John Goodchild.

It is not too strong to say that the pictures evoke the atmosphere of what Wakefield was like in George Gissing's childhood. The most important view for Gissingites is of Stamp Office Yard where Mrs. Gissing lived for the ten years following her husband's death.

All of Stamp Office Yard and many of the other yards that led off from Kirkgate and Westgate were demolished before I became seriously interested in Gissing and I have no memory of that particular one. Fortunately the city council arranged to have all slum clearance properties photographed before demolition and thanks to John Goodchild I have recently acquired two more views of Stamp Office Yard though they are not so impressive as Clarke's drawing of it. I haven't identified which house Mrs. Gissing occupied but the three pictures have modified my views of the

Cartwrights' home in *A Life's Morning* (*Gissing Newsletter*, April 1975, pp. 1-12). Describing the Cartwrights, George wrote: "A few years ago they had occupied a much more roomy dwelling [60 Westgate along with 2, 4 Thompson's Yard] on the edge of the aristocratic region of Dunfield though not strictly in St. Luke's [St. John's] – the Belgravia of the town – they of course spoke of it as if it were." From the Census Returns of 1871 it can be seen that T. W. Gissing's shop and house were on the boundary of St. John's Ward, and he was one of the town councillors for that Ward. A little earlier in the book George had said: "A crisis in the fortunes of the [Cartwright] family had necessitated a reduction in their establishment; the district in which they now dwelt was humbler, but then it could always be described as 'near North Parade' [South Parade].... [They] lived, moved and had their being in an abode consisting of six rooms, a cellar and a lumber closet." Stamp Office Yard was about a hundred yards long and ran from the South side of Westgate, from which it was entered through an enclosed passageway, to the rear of South Parade. Importantly, many of the houses in the illustrations I have described above can be seen to be double-fronted with two windows, and so two rooms on each of three floors. I am still of opinion that when George wrote of the view from an upper window looking over the cattle market etc., he was thinking of what he used to see from the rooms above his father's shop and not what would have been seen from Stamp Office Yard. I suppose that there is a slight possibility that he might have done so from the later home but as there were seven other yards or streets parallel to and between Stamp Office Yard and Market Street, which I have said earlier led from Westgate to the cattle market, I don't think that it was at all likely.

Other drawings of places mentioned by Gissing are Westgate Railway Station; Sandal Castle

Ruins; and the Old Vicarage which I have linked with "A Quarry on the Heath." Irritatingly there are four views which miss places of interest by the smallest of margins. The one looking up Market Street blurs what would have been T. W. Gissing's shop; that of the Old Corn Exchange shows none of the buildings near it – including the shop; we see 1, 3 and 5 Wentworth Terrace but not number 9, where the Gissing sisters had their first school; and the drawings of Westgate (Unitarian) Chapel hides Back Lane School where George began his education.

The whole of the six hundred hardback copies of the drawings were sold within a month of publication and there are only a hundred of the four hundred paperbacks remaining. – Clifford Brook.

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Notes and News

The English Association has just published a *Handbook of Societies and Collections*, edited by Alicia C. Percival (£2.50 to non-members), in which the *Gissing Newsletter* and the Gissing collection in the Wakefield Metropolitan District Libraries are duly listed and described.

A Gissing letter, dated July 11, 1892, to another George Gissing was sold at Sotheby's on October 4. The reason for this correspondence with a man whose address had been mistaken for that of the novelist is given in the Diary and in the letters to Bertz.

A new American magazine, *Bookviews*, published by Bowker (publishers of *Books in Print*), recently contained an interview of Alastair Cooke who says he would like to see Gissing as part of a

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television series he hosts, "Masterpiece Theatre" (article by John F. Baker, vol. 1, no.1, September 1977, p. 9).

Two books recently published in America contain allusions to Gissing. In *Rebecca West: A Celebration* with an introduction by Samuel Hynes (Viking, 1977, 780pp. \$15.00), one reads that Dorothy Richardson carried on the work of Gissing. How he spent his time in the Boston Public Library reading novel after novel of George Sand is recorded on p. 205 of Patricia Thompson's *George Sand and the Victorians* (Columbia University Press, 1977, 282 pp., \$17.50).

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Recent Publications

- Donald E. Morton, "Recent Books," *Modern Fiction Studies*, Winter 1975-76, pp. 591-94. Review of *The Born Exile*.
- Miriam J. Benkovitz, (ed.), *A Passionate Prodigality: Letters to Alan Bird from Richard Aldington 1949-1962*, The New York Public Library, 1975. Letter no. 103 of November 15, 1955 deals in part with Gissing and Calabria.
- Lee Feagin Courtney, "George Gissing: Victorian," *Dissertation Abstracts International*, June 1976, pp. 8070A-8071A.
- C. J. Francis, "Reviews," *Humanities Association Review*, Summer 1976, pp. 305-06. Review of Michael Collie's bibliography.
- R. C. Churchill, "Letter to the Editor," *Dickensian*, May 1977, p. 113. Acknowledges Gissing's influence on his own Dickens criticism.

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- Peter Keating, "English Fiction," *British Book News*, June 1977, pp. 486-87. Review of the last three Harvester Gissing novels: *The Unclassed*, *In the Year of Jubilee* and *Our Friend the Charlatan*.
- Anon., "Italians support Gissing," *Yorkshire Post*, July 26, 1977, p.10.
- Anthony W. Shipp, "Replies," *Notes and Queries*, July-August 1977, p. 367. Gives the source of the unidentified quotation from *Demos*, ch. VI ("dreamed against a distant goal"): Rossetti, *The House of Life*, Sonnet XLV, "Secret Parting," line 4.

- Michael Ballard, "Born in Exile as an organic study in behaviour and motivation," *English Studies* (Amsterdam), August 1977, pp. 324-33.
- Mary O'Connor, "John Davidson: An Annotated Bibliography of Writings about him," *English Literature in Transition*, 1977, XX, no. 3, pp. 112-74. Contains various references to Gissing.
- John Halperin, "How to read Gissing," *English Literature in Transition*, 1977, XX, no. 4, pp. 188-98. The same number contains some correspondence by Michael Collie and Pierre Coustillas on *George Gissing: A Bibliography*.
- Anon., "Tribute to Yorks Author," *Yorkshire Evening Post*, November 7, 1977.
- Anon., "Reprints," *Victorian Studies Bulletin*, November 1977, p. 4. Information on the Harvester reprints.
- Pierre Coustillas, "Gissing Games," *Times Literary Supplement*, December 9, 1977, p. 1455. Review of *George Gissing: A Bibliography*.

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- Konrad Gross (ed.), *Der englische soziale Roman im 19. Jahrhundert*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977. Contains many allusions to Gissing besides reprints of two substantial contributions – an anonymous one ("The Novel of Misery," *Quarterly Review*, vol. 196, 1902, pp. 391-414) and a chapter from Granville Hick's *Figures of Transition*, 1939, pp. 179-203.
- Lloyd Fernando, 'New Women' in the late Victorian Novel, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977. Gissing appears on pp. 11, 21, 117-28 and 149.
- John Lucas, *The Literature of Change: Studies in the Nineteenth-Century Provincial Novel*, Harvester Press/Barnes & Noble. Contains comments on *The Odd Women*, pp. 202-07.