

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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A Swedish View of Gissing

Klara Johanson

[In 1929 the Swedish firm of Wahlström & Widstrand published a translation by Fanny Ekenstierna of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, with an introduction by Klara Johanson (1875-1948), an essayist and critic who from 1900 to 1910 was book reviewer for *Stockholms Dagblad*. According to a recent history of Swedish literature “few people have lived so much among books” as Klara Johanson. She confessed that life as such did not particularly interest her and she found consolation in the fact that “in the end everything must become literature.” Her introduction to *Henry Ryecroft* has been translated into English by P. F. Kropholler. Readers of the *Newsletter* will easily clarify

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the confused statement about Gissing, Ryecroft and *The Crown of Life* which occurs in the last few lines of the original and therefore of the translation. – P. C.]

Is there anyone who would lose his head with joy if he unexpectedly received a life annuity of a few thousand kronor? Lots of people would, I think. If the event is to produce its full effect, the person concerned should be impecunious, middle-aged and tired of his work. If we pursue this fantasy and wonder how after coming to his senses such a released individual would order his life so as to be worthy of the grace received, we have to provide him with some other minor but essential conditions: a well-stored mind, freedom from human ties and a well-defined noble ideal. Without realising it, he must have spent all his years of poverty as a preparation for this modest piece of luck which only serves to bring out his own resources. And this fortunate proletarian must never become accustomed to his status, he must never degenerate into a mere pensioner; whenever

he receives his quarterly payment without having lifted a finger to earn it, he must be seized with wonder at the fact that he can be absolutely sure of it...

Such a properly ordained conjunction of personality and destiny may sound like a fairy tale but does not seem absurd. Henry Ryecroft is the ideal example but though he is such an extraordinary figure, the reader cannot help believing in him. For obviously he is not addressing the public. We overhear authentic soliloquies, wistful improvisations in the twilight played on an exquisite instrument. Can anyone listen without fascinated envy when he analyses his reasons for joy or again expresses his sensations of happiness? Those who are so minded can resist the lure by getting into a state of righteous indignation at this infamous epicurean, this selfish sluggard who leads a life of comfortable high-mindedness in his little Devonshire cottage without ever considering how he could increase his paltry three hundred pounds a year by some honest work or whether he should make a free contribution to one of humanity's welfare schemes. Henry Ryecroft defends his own art of living with some very engaging quibbles.

Apart from this, two things preserve Henry Ryecroft's sybaritic existence from the insipidity of unclouded happiness. Scenes from his long years of starvation and worry and agony loom up fairly often from the haunted recesses of his soul and the newspapers keep him informed that every day

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the world is taking another step towards the hell of barbarism. Thus the holiday enchantment of this aesthetic hermit is flavoured with just enough salt and bitterness.

A yellowing, flimsy newspaper cutting reminds me that exactly twenty-five years ago in an article about George Gissing published in a Sunday paper – he had then died very recently – I ventured the supposition that like his alter ego “he must have found by some happy dispensation the real Sunday rest which never falls to the lot of those whose work awaits them the next morning.” Yes, in the grave, one must assume. Meanwhile, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (according to the colourless title of the original) remains as an authentic piece of autobiography, even though the annuity, the freedom and the peace have been shown to be mere wishful thinking. After all, does not our wishful thinking contain far more of the essential truth about ourselves than our actual circumstances which are so often hidden behind a ridiculous disguise? This is particularly true of the creator of Henry Ryecroft.

George Gissing's life reads like the invention of some desperate Russian novelist. If it had contained no more misery than the memories Henry Ryecroft selected with careful artistry, Gissing would now be decently classified among the numerous heroic artists' lives which call forth admiration and affection rather than compassion. His case, however, does not lend itself to romantic transformation.

Here are some of the bare facts of George Gissing's martyrdom. At the age of eighteen he was caught in the act of committing a series of small thefts at Owens College, Manchester, an educational establishment which now possesses his bust; after leaving prison he was helped to emigrate to America, where he wandered around, starved, picked up odd jobs and a respectable situation as a teacher which he gave up after a few months. As a husband of nineteen he settled in London to embark on his literary career; his wife was a young prostitute from Manchester whom he had loved since his college days and whom he in vain attempted to redeem from her occupation and the drinking habits which went with it. For at least ten years he was legally tied to this hopeless creature, who, away from him, sank towards the London slums and strayed down her own dismal

road, until her death in complete misery provided him with the opportunity for another matrimonial blunder.

The second Mrs. Gissing was also from a low social class, though "respectable." She developed a violent disposition and fought against her surroundings with missiles as well as with her tongue. Thus, after a few hectic years, Gissing had to run away with his two small sons from this dangerous entourage. Once again he had broken away from an impossible though still inescapable wife. This was becoming customary, and that grim irony which controlled Gissing's life was once again permitted to create another tangle. He unexpectedly met an attractive Frenchwoman with literary interests who had already fallen in love with his novels, and he was not the man to deny himself such a conquest. Their subsequent relationship was subject to some alarming conditions: Gissing now moved to France, where the connection had to be announced as a legal marriage in order to spare the feelings of the lady's refined and punctilious relatives. As for the other side of the Channel ... well, one cannot imagine the consequences of this quasi-bigamy. The only pleasant thing I can say about Gissing's final period is that he wrote the book about Henry Ryecroft during a few French summers and that at the age of forty-six death delivered him from wives and other worries.

This biographical outline is the astonishing setting for a life of unremitting toil, and in the centre we see a high-minded, extremely sensitive man, an intellectual and moral aristocrat. The faux pas which made him go wrong in his early youth is seen to be out of keeping with his character and his mode of life: it was an accident, just as if he had stumbled and broken his leg. However, it represented a burden from which he could never really free himself.

On the other hand, as an author George Gissing maintained from first to last the strictest integrity and dignity. Of necessity he wrote ceaselessly but never in a rush. He did not consult public taste and he was careful not to spoil his style and his conscience by journalism. With bitter insight his best novels describe the proletarian worlds of London, that of day-labourers in *Demos* and *The Nether World*, that of literary men in *New Grub Street*. Driven by discomfort and horror,

his creative imagination was condemned to work in the crowded hovels of mean streets, in dismal boarding-houses, among the public amusements of the Crystal Palace and at noisy socialist meetings.

This streak of the inferno does not smoulder and explode in other, more sober works. They present unmistakably autobiographical variations of the low-born, poor and highly intellectual young man, whose every instinct causes him to reach out for the sphere of the free and the high-born. *The Unclassed*, *Born in Exile* – such titles express that the characters are socially in the wrong world. They embody Gissing's penetrating, honest introspection and his erotic psychology. They are romantics who suffer from the humiliating relentlessness of the sensual impulse; at times of reckless tenderness they commit themselves to a misalliance and they are at all times the ardent devotees of some Beatrice.

Gissing dreamt of a companion who was a lady and whose heart and soul were shaped by the ideal of English feudal culture. But this was not sufficient: she must also have a superior, emancipated mind and besides be able to enjoy Sophocles in the original. At times he has been able to create cultured, emancipated and strong women with sympathy, as in *The Odd Women*, but his "ladies" seem to be copied from society novels. They are, however, sincerely meant as the all-embracing symbol of life's highest possibilities, and if we view them as such they become

significant and a little moving. In his novel *The Crown of Life*, which is interspersed with discussions on three things which Gissing hated with foresight and penetration: industrialism, imperialism and militarism, the heroine is named after the Greek goddess of peace.

We understand why Henry Ryecroft dismissed his marriage from his memory and why he banned eroticism from his programme for happiness. In order to portray the mood of his life he had to create a female figure and call her Irene.

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Cross Purposes in Gissing

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[This paper is an adapted version of a lecture which was addressed to the Society for Teachers of English, at Easter, 1971 (see *Gissing Newsletter*, July 1972) – an audience which could not be assumed to have read more than a few of Gissing’s novels. Mr. Irwin is fully aware that the particular bent of his critical interest – which had to do with the techniques and effects of Realism – has resulted in an essay which is far from doing justice to Gissing in a general sense. He writes: “I’m very specifically concerned with where I think the novels go wrong. It would be difficult to deduce from what I say here that I’m actually an admirer of Gissing.” – P. C.]

The ill-luck that dogged Gissing throughout his life survives to plague his reputation. He has never received his due as a novelist and it seems unlikely that he ever will receive it. Unquestionably he does certain things better than even the greatest of his contemporaries; he brings to life areas of experience that they leave untouched. Certain of his novels – notably *The Odd Women*, far braver and profounder than *The Bostonians* in its treatment of female emancipation – are not so much underrated as incomprehensibly ignored. Yet just as Gissing was himself responsible for much of the misfortune he suffered when alive so his posthumous tribulations are to an extent deserved. There is something in the very grain of his talent that raises doubts, that makes it impossible to isolate his strengths from his weaknesses. Critical discussion of his work returns centripetally to the question: why, judged by the highest standards, is there something unsatisfactory about it?

Baldly stated the answer I wish to propose sounds not only disparaging but unhelpfully vague: I think his novels are incoherent and depressing. But in the course of this paper I hope to give both adjectives critical validity and to show that Gissing’s failure – if that is the word – is both honourable and interesting.

It is helpful to begin at the end, because Gissing is very much a novelist of ideas, and his last book, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, sets story aside for the direct presentation of opinions.

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He has much to say about the suffering caused by poverty:

“When I think of all the sorrow and the barrenness that has been wrought in my life by want of a few more pounds per annum than I was able to earn, I stand

aghast at money's significance. What kindly joys have I lost, those simple forms of happiness to which every heart has claim, because of poverty."

And again:

"Would I live it over gain, that life of the garret and cellar? Not with the assurance of fifty years' contentment such as I now enjoy to follow upon it!... Oh, but the waste of energy, of zeal, of youth!... The pity of it! And – if our conscience mean anything at all – the bitter wrong!"

The preoccupation is hardly surprising in a man who had endured such appalling privations as Gissing. In any case the theme is a sufficiently familiar one in the Victorian novel. The compassion and sense of outrage in such passages as these recall Dickens or Kingsley. But Gissing, through Ryecroft, qualifies his own attitude in a way that distinguishes it from the humanitarianism of his time:

"Poverty is of course a relative thing; the term has reference, above all, to one's standing as an intellectual being."

The force of the reservation is considerable. Ryecroft admits that "the people ... as a visible multitude ... often move me to abhorrence." He believes that "Democracy is full of menace to all the finer hopes of civilization." Only "the silent few, who ... bend to the flower and watch the sunset ... are worth a thought." Despite his obsessive concern with poverty, then, Gissing despises the vast majority of the poor.

The position is by no means untenable, but it is certainly curious. It would require far more theoretical justification than Ryecroft ever provides. Since the book in question is not so much a novel as the display of a temperament, Ryecroft's attitude can pass as an idiosyncrasy and no harm is done. But in a number of the other novels the issue is brought to the fore by Gissing himself, and the superficiality of the author's arguments can betray the book as a whole.

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Demos is sub-titled "A story of English Socialism." It tells how a young working-class radical, Richard Mutimer, left a large bequest by a prosperous uncle, sets out to industrialise the country district of Wanley along co-operative lines. The novel deals in large generalisations and assertions. Clearly it is intended to reveal important truths about socialism, about commercialism, and above all about the effects of money and power on the working-class. But the tale is rendered not merely unpersuasive but dull by the obviousness of the author's contempt for his main character. The central issue has been prejudged. Richard is scarcely seen to be corrupted by his uncle's money since Gissing shows so little good in him at his first appearance. It is speedily made apparent that he is egotistical, power-loving, insensitive and only a superficial socialist. The long story designed to display all these weaknesses becomes tediously self-fulfilling.

Gissing's social views emerge as naively tautological:

"It was unfortunate that Richard did not pronounce the name of his bride elect quite as it sounds on cultured lips ... there was a slurring of the second syllable disagreeably suggestive of vulgarity."

"He pronounced the word 'clerk' as it is spelt; it made him seem yet more ignoble."

The attitude implied is reducible to syllogistic form: "People who mispronounce such words as 'clerk' or 'Adela' are ignoble. Members of the working-class are likely to mispronounce them. Therefore the working-class is ignoble." What matters critically is not that the argument of *Demos* is distasteful but that it is circular.

The concern with social trivia seems particularly disproportionate since Gissing has so little to say about Mutimer's co-operative. It is through this project that he is to express his socialistic ideals; surely it is on the project's success or failure that he should be judged. But Gissing simply by-passes the subject. Here is a description of an early month's work:

"New Wanley, as the industrial settlement was to be named, was shaping itself in accordance with the ideas of the committee with which Mutimer took counsel, and the undertaking was no small one."

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Belatedly and briefly there is a reference to fair wages, decent houses at cheap rents, good schools, a library – but Gissing never "realizes" these achievements, still less gives Richard any credit for them. In *A Life's Morning* he writes:

"Men and women go to their graves in wretchedness who might have done noble things with an extra pound a week to live on. It does not sound a lofty doctrine, does it? But I have a vast faith in the extra pound a week."

Yet Richard, who is at least trying to provide that extra pound a week, gets very short shrift. The hero of *Demos* is Hubert Eldon, a romantically-minded young aristocrat, in whose life "the ruling motive ... is the love of beautiful things." When Adela discovers a lost will that transfers Richard's inheritance to him he at once sets about de-industrialising Wanley. Such is his conservationist zeal that he dismisses the employees of the co-operative forthwith and gives them a fortnight's notice to quit their homes. Gissing tells us nothing about the subsequent fate of these unfortunates, and there is no hint that Hubert's course of action is in any way questionable. Indeed he is rewarded with the hand of Adela, after Richard's providential death in a political riot.

If there is a moral of a sort it is drawn by the vicar, Wyvern. He claims "that happiness is very evenly distributed among all classes and conditions." The "excessive suffering of the body" to which the poor are liable is counterbalanced by the "excessive mental suffering" of the more cultivated. Yet this Panglossian view does not square with the picture of life that Gissing himself provides in *Demos*. The "excessive mental suffering" of Hubert conveys nothing like the pain of those scenes in the novel which show the effects of poverty. Moreover Emma, the working-class fiancée whom Richard deserts for Adela, is made to seem especially pitiable in that "it was her terrible misfortune to have feelings too refined for the position in which fate had placed her." Suffering both physically and mentally she is a living refutation of Wyvern's theory. Such characters are, of course, numerous in Gissing's work, yet his social theories concede them nothing – do not even take account of them. Wyvern's moralising throws up another interesting contradiction. He says that he can agree with the socialists only in their attacks upon the contemp-

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tible bourgeoisie, whose activities cause misery both to the poor and to the "uncommercial

wealthy.” This latter class of society alone stands unrebuked in *Demos*, and it is to this class that Hubert and Adela, in their eventual affluence, are recruited. Yet the wealth they have been supplied with has been accrued for them by the capitalistic enterprise of old Mr. Mutimer, the ironmaster. Dickens is repeatedly at pains to show that the leisured classes are ultimately parasitic on the labours of others. It is a point that Gissing does not make and perhaps does not see.

Demos, then, is “incoherent” in a conventional critical sense: the story the author tells is at odds with the interpretation that he himself puts on it. But there is a less obvious form of dislocation that limits the effectiveness of this novel and of Gissing’s work in general. Again it derives from the obsession with poverty. A quotation from *New Grub Street* will provide a useful way in to the subject:

“At eight o’clock in the evening there remained half a page to be written. Biffen had already worked about nine hours, and on breaking off to appease his hunger he doubted whether to finish to-night or to postpone the last lines till tomorrow. The discovery that only a small crust of bread lay in the cupboard decided him to write no more; he would have to go out to purchase a loaf, and that was disturbance.

But stay; had he enough money? He searched his pockets. Two pence and two farthings; no more.

You are probably not aware that at bakers’ shops in the poor quarters the price of the half-quartern loaf varies sometimes from week to week. At present, as Biffen knew, it was twopence three-farthings, a common figure. But Harold did not possess three farthings, only two. Reflecting, he remembered to have passed yesterday a shop where the bread was marked twopence halfpenny; it was a shop in a very obscure little street off Hampstead Road, some distance from Clipstone Street. Thither he must repair. He had only his hat and a muffler

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to put on, for again he was wearing his overcoat in default of the under one, and his ragged umbrella to take from the corner; so he went forth.

To his delight the twopence halfpenny announcement was still in the baker’s window. He obtained a loaf, wrapped it in the piece of paper he had brought – small bakers decline to supply paper for this purpose – and strode joyously homeward again.

This is Gissing in his best realistic vein. In context the careful documentation is the more effective in that it borrows authenticity and precise meaning from a hundred related allusions elsewhere in the book.

As the passage implies, the reader has heard before about the absence of Biffen’s jacket. He has also been made to feel the pangs of sparse eating, having, for instance, seen a slice of bread and dripping salted and peppered and eaten with a knife and fork to give it more the air of a solid meal. And Gissing has provided the novel its own cost of living index in the form of numerous mutually corroborative financial details. Reardon sells his family furniture for eighteen pounds ten, and a hundred of his treasured books for sixpence a volume. It is possible to rent three unfurnished rooms for eight and sixpence a week, but in his extremity Reardon can afford only a garret off Upper Street for half a crown. Biffen can “support life” on three or four shillings a week. He receives sixpence an hour for composition lessons.

The passage quoted is typical of Gissing in that it presents a character in certain clothes, with a certain amount of money in his pocket, going to a certain street a certain distance away. The circumstantiality of the writing has a constant defining force. If Reardon, for example, is shown to be exhausted, it will be because he has walked a specific distance between two actual localities in London: his ordeal can be measured. This painstaking documentation is impressive. It gives episode after episode in Gissing the sort of verisimilitude that Zola, for instance, often sacrifices to more florid effects.

But this method of writing has implications that Gissing himself does not always seem to recognise. Clearly *any* mode of description in a novel implies certain attitudes and aims on the part of the novelist, who naturally records those details of the external world that he takes to be

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important and relevant to his story. If he dwells, let us say, on natural scenery and changes in the weather the suggestion is that the characters in his story are responsive to such phenomena and may be influenced by them. The novel will be coherent, at one level, if the attitudes and aims thus implied in the descriptive technique correspond to those expressed in the story itself. Now in Gissing's work the emphasis on financial circumstance is so habitual that the implicit message is unmistakable: our lives are economically determined. It is also, of course, a message that he often states directly. Yet several major aspects of Gissing's work run clean counter to this belief. Repeatedly the descriptions will imply, and the author confirm, that the decisive pressures of life are the material ones: poverty, hunger, sickness. As repeatedly, however, the narrative will be pushed forward not by these pressures but by lavish coincidence, extravagant pledges, unlikely strokes of fate. After feelingly persuading the reader of the harshly belittling effects of poverty, Gissing will seek to interest him in nonsense about lost wills or mistaken identity. His novels are part novelette. This is, of course, a criticism that could be applied to many of the great Victorians – to George Eliot, for example, or to Dickens. But in Gissing's work the discrepancy is more marked because he is a more realistic writer, and much more of a materialist, than the other novelists of his time. Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton* provides a reasonably close comparison. There is a similar gulf between the painful truth with which the material circumstances of the protagonists are pictured and the feeble melodrama of the plot. Like Gissing, Mrs. Gaskell shows through her descriptions what she believes to be the realities of life but develops her story along implausibly romantic lines. Were Gissing true, not necessarily to his actual view of life but to the view of life implied by his carefully documented descriptions, then his novels would have the coherence of total – of Biffenesque – realism. They might, of course, be the duller for that, but that is another story. The general conclusion to be drawn is that in a work which is intermittently realistic, the true passages will betray the artificial.

One reason for the superiority of *New Grub Street* is the fact that in this novel Gissing comes

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closest to an open endorsement of the belief in economic determinism that he constantly implies. Money is shown to be so important that it can change a man morally. Mrs. Yule tells Marian: "Poverty will make the best people bad." Milvain claims, with some justice: "If I were rich I should be a generous and good man." The hero of the novel, Reardon, is shown to be partly corrupted by poverty and to some extent responsible for his own downfall. In various of Gissing's other novels there is an ideal character flourishing spiritually despite privation. *New Grub Street* is bleakly consistent. The serious writers all die in sufficiently wretched circumstances. The charlatans

flourish financially and, in the end, morally.

A good deal, however, hinges on that “in the end.” Milvain emerges prosperous and genuinely kind. But he has reached that happy financial and moral position by means of a betrayal of Marian Yule that is meanly calculating and made by the author to appear so. Gissing may preach opportunism as the only practical course, but he cannot make himself or his readers approve it. On the other hand he proclaims relentlessly that idealism can only bring poverty and hence degradation. The effect of *New Grub Street* is inescapably depressing.

I take this adjective to be a potentially useful, if pejorative, critical term. In tragic literature circumstances may appear cruel, unjust, destructive, but the suggestion is that Man can rise above them. In reformist literature circumstances are supreme, but the sense is that by social or political effort they may one day be altered. Gissing’s novels depress because they combine a belief in the supremacy of material circumstances with a belief that any attempt to change them is futile and probably undesirable. It is not surprising that his work has a dyspeptic quality. His main characters, placed in hopeless financial circumstances, tend to acknowledge defeat by falling fatally ill. For a character in Gissing’s work to be healthy is almost a sign of spiritual inadequacy or bad taste. Gissing’s heroes, and with them his readers, are brought to a dead end.

Gissing is an interesting example – perhaps the most interesting example among the major English novelists – of a writer whose aims are at variance with his abilities. He believes in ideals, in the search for Beauty, and tries to dramatise this belief in his novels. But the life he responds to as a

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descriptive writer is bitterly materialistic. It is difficult enough for him to bring these two interests into meaningful engagement, let alone into equilibrium. And beyond doubt it is again the realistic side of the work that prevails: the ideals presented seem sadly remote and vulnerable.

A lesser writer – and, indeed, many greater ones – would cheat a way out of the dilemma. Felix Holt and *Oliver Twist* have money thrust upon them. Mary Barton and Mr. Micawber find prosperity in the colonies. It is unusual, however, for Gissing to evade the implications of his findings. His glum truthfulness holds out to the end, with the ideals he prizes routed by circumstance. There is something salutary, something admirable about this dogged pessimism. Earlier I suggested that the dispiriting effect of Gissing’s novels was a symptom of something unsatisfactory about them. But it is probable that if they were more “satisfactory” in this sense they would be both less intriguing, and less worthy of respect.

Notes on *Denzil Quarrier*

P. F. Kropholler

[The edition referred to is the first English edition published in 1892 by Lawrence & Bullen].

- p. 20, l. 25

“That is no Morland...”: reference to the painter of English rural life, George Morland (1763-1804).

- p. 28, l. 1

“Well, we have heard before of an ass opening its mouth to prophesy”: reference to the story of

Balaam's ass in *Numbers*, ch. 22.

- p. 28, 1. 6

[Part of a Russian newspaper] "completely obliterated with the censor's lamp-black": another

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reference to this occurs in *The Crown of Life*, ch. XIX, where Piers Otway speaks of "caviare, i.e. bits blacked out in [Russian] newspapers and periodicals."

- p. 30, 1. 4.

"... Marie Grubbe ...": In his letters to Bertz Gissing more than once referred to the Danish writer Jens Peter Jacobsen, especially to his novel *Niels Lyhne*.

- p. 37, 1, 17.

"Some enemy hath done this": "An enemy hath done this" (St. Matthew, XIII, 28).

- p. 41, 1. 22.

"even in municipal matters the old order was threatened...": perhaps an oblique reference to l. 408 of Tennyson: *The Passing of Arthur* ("The old order changeth, yielding place to new").

- p. 59, 1. 11.

"Wait and see": Denzil Quarrier again uses this phrase on p. 177 (l. 20). This is of some interest as it is usually attributed to H. H. Asquith (1852-1928), who is said to have used it far too often in speeches in 1910.

- p. 64, 1. 22.

Ivy remarks that she has "a ridiculous name." According to E. G. Withycombe: *The Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names*, this name is a late 19th century invention. In Gissing's days it may thus have sounded far-fetched.

- p. 88, 1. 10.

"the rapt oration flowing free": Tennyson: *In Memoriam*, LXXXVII, ("Who, but hung to hear | The rapt oration flowing free").

- p. 92, 1. 5.

"Oh, I must have a local habitation – the more solid the better": Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V.I.15 ("The poet's pen ... gives to airy nothings a local habitation and a name").

- p. 105, 1. 6.

"... why in the name of the Jötuns...": about the only occasion on which Quarrier's interest in

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Scandinavian literature becomes evident. *Jotunn* would be the correct form, however. They were Scandinavian giants.

- p. 106, 1. 26.

"Lilian ... had passed the Oxford Local" [when she was about fifteen]: Gissing passed this

examination in 1872, when he too was about fifteen.

- p. 120, l. 21.

“... to a pure mind all things are pure...”: The Epistle of Paul to Titus, I, 15 (“Unto the pure all things are pure”).

- p. 121, l. 12.

“Oh stay, the maiden cried...”: according to the Oxford University Press edition of the works of Longfellow the poet wrote “the maiden said.”

- p. 122, l. 16.

“That is the mere reek of the bottomless pit, palpable to all”: *Revelation*, XX, 1 (“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit”).

- p. 126, l. 10.

“These people ... think themselves pillars of society...”: perhaps referring to Ibsen’s play *The Pillars of Society* (1877).

- p. 128, l. 10.

“... the ‘little language’ of one who was still a lover’”: “Little language” was Swift’s name for the baby language he used in his correspondence with Stella.

- p. 138, l. 21.

“You have come like a sort of snow-queen...”: H. C. Andersen wrote a fairy tale *Sneedronningen* (i.e. The Snow Queen). Considering Lilian’s Scandinavian associations a reference to Andersen would be very appropriate. It may, of course, be merely Tobias’s invention. We are told the chill of Lilian’s fingers “prompted him to this poetical flight.”

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- p. 169, l. 8.

“The best of all hours between eleven at night and two in the morning. You know the lines in ‘Penseroso’”: probably referring to ll. 85/86, “Or let my lamp, at midnight hour, | Be seen in some high lonely tower...”

- p. 170, l. 11.

“What a miserably conventional soul that woman [George Eliot] has”: this condemnation of George Eliot is very striking since, judging from his correspondence, Gissing seems to have admired this author.

- p. 172, l. 19.

“They dissolve at Easter!”: the dissolution of Parliament took place on March 24, 1880.

- p. 109, l. 1.

“And his ‘men of light and leading’ ... “He has stolen the phrase,” remarked Mrs. Wade. “Where from, I can’t say; but I’m perfectly sure I have come across it”: according to Brewer: *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, the phrase is Burke’s although ultimately derived from Milton. Disraeli was very fond of it.

- p. 182, 1. 19.

“... he would stick by his ale as tenaciously as the old farmer of Thornaby Waste”: a reference to Tennyson’s dialect poem “Northern Farmer, Old Style.” The attitude of the farmer of *Thurnaby waäste* may be summed up in the last line of the poem: “Git ma my aäle I tell tha, an’ if I mun doy I mun doy.”

- p. 203, 1. 12.

“To be weak is miserable, doing or suffering”: from Milton: *Paradise Lost*, book I, 1. 157.

- p. 216, 1. 4.

“But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you”: St. Luke, XII, 31.

- p. 220, 1. 26.

“... you have inadvertently made use of a phrase which is, or should be, consecrated by a religious

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significance”: the clergyman must have been thinking of Mrs. Lester’s use of the phrase “fall down and worship.” It occurs in *The Book of Common Prayer* (Psalm XCV, 6: “O come, let us worship and fall down: and kneel before the Lord our Maker”).

- p. 223, 1. 3.

“... men have no difficulty in keeping important secrets, Samson notwithstanding”: of course a reference to the story of Samson and Delilah in ch. XVI of *The Book of Judges*.

- p. 226, 1. 5.

“her heart pleaded for the man who allayed suffering at his gates”: perhaps a reference to Cecil Frances Alexander’s hymn “The Burial of Moses”: “The rich man in his castle, | The poor man at his gate’.

- p. 227, 1. 19.

“Sir Wilfred Lawson would long ago have been stamped out as a bore of the first magnitude but for his saving humour”: Sir Wilfred Lawson was one of the leaders of the anti-liquor agitation. According to Justin McCarthy he was “a humorist of a fresh and vigorous order, and he always took care to amuse his listeners and never allowed his speeches to bore them.” (*A History of Our Own Times*, ch. LXI).

- p. 317, 1. 9.

“Majority of over six hundred!”: Denzil Quarrier’s victory in the election sounds very probable. The 1880 election ended in “utter rout and confusion” for the Conservatives (Justin McCarthy). In the new Parliament the Liberals had a majority of some hundred and twenty.

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Recent Publications

Books

- *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Pierre Coustillas and Colin Partridge, London & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972, pp. XVII + 564, £7.50. Blue cloth in brick-coloured wrapper. The introduction covers 46 pages and the 191 items reprinted, which consist of articles, reviews and letters, range from 1880 to 1912.
- *Demos, A Story of English Socialism*, ed. with an introduction by Pierre Coustillas. Brighton, The Harvester Press, 1972, pp. XLIV + 477, £4.50. Red cloth with black and gilt titling. The editorial matter includes a 6,000-word introduction, notes to the text, a bibliographical note on the publishing history of the novel, a short study of the manuscript in the Berg Collection and a bibliography of articles on *Demos*.

Articles, reviews, etc.

- Fernando, L., "Gissing's Studies in Vulgarism: Aspects of his Anti-Feminism," *Southern Review* (Adelaide), vol. IV, no. 1, 1970, pp. 43-52. Mr. Fernando's study is mainly concerned with *The Whirlpool*.
- Van Thal, Herbert, *The Tops of the Mulberry Trees*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1971. The author was responsible for the publication of the 1947 edition of *A Life's Morning* and the 1968 edition of *The Odd Women*. He has interesting, if unwarrantably pessimistic, things to say about his connection with Gissing's books, on pp. 73, 97-98 and 138-40.
- Harris, Wendell V., "Reviews," *Studies in Short Fiction*, Spring 1972, pp. 204-205. A review of *George Gissing, Essays and Fiction*.
- Zilberstein, I., "Turgenev – Discoveries of the last few years," *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, April 25, 1972, p. 6. Refers to the two letters of Turgenev to Gissing published by P. Coustillas in the *Times Literary Supplement*, September 4, 1970, p. 974.

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- Tennyson, G. N., "Recent Books: British Fiction," *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, June 1972, p. 121. A short review of the Norton paperback edition of *The Odd Women*.
- Muggeridge, Malcolm, "The Memories of Malcolm Muggeridge, Part 2: I marry into the Aristocracy of Socialism," *Sunday Times Weekly Review*, September 17, 1972, p. 33. Gives an unreliable version of the relationship between his mother-in-law (Mrs. Williams, later Mrs. Dobbs) and Gissing. Malcolm Muggeridge's autobiography, *The Green Stick*, was published at the end of September 1972.
- Korg, Jacob, "Reviews," *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, September 1972, pp. 219-20. A review of P. J. Keating's *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction and Working Class Stories of the 1890s*.

- Coustillas, P., "Readers' Queries," *Notes and Queries*, October 1972, p. 383. Source of the following quotation wanted: Stella's eyes "dreamed against a distant goal;" *Demos*, p. 57, in all one-volume Smith, Elder and Nash & Grayson editions.