

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*.

Volume IX, Number 4
October, 1973

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The Guilty Secret

Gillian Tindall

[This is an extract from chapter III of a book about Gissing to be published next spring by Maurice Temple Smith in London and probably by Harcourt Brace in America. The title, the author told me some months ago, is to be *George Gissing, Writer*. Gillian Tindall has made herself an enviable reputation among modern English novelists with a number of stories like *The Youngest*, *Someone Else* and *Fly Away Home*, the last of which was awarded the 1972 Somerset Maugham Award. She recently published a collection of short stories, *Dances of Death* (Hodder & Stoughton). There have been translations of her novels into Polish, Italian and French. – P.C.]

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Subscriptions

Private Subscribers: £1.00 per annum
Libraries: £1.50 per annum

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Of the various personal themes which run like significant, persistent yet often irrelevant threads through Gissing's novels and stories, that of the Guilty Secret is perhaps the most ubiquitous and at the same time the most elusive. You can read a number of his books before even spotting it as a theme, yet, once noticed, it makes its presence felt everywhere. It crops up attached to important characters and to minor ones; it plays a key part in the development of some plots, and elsewhere it is a mere incidental, a part of the background of particular significance only to those familiar with Gissing's own experiences. Sometimes the "secret" is something clear-cut and unequivocally shameful – an actual prison sentence or similar early misdemeanour. Sometimes it is something far more generalised, like a humble background carefully dissembled, a present lack of cash similarly dissembled, or a family disaster. Twice it is a secret marriage. Sometimes, again, it is something more in the nature of an overall fault of character that is being concealed – a devious ambition, a lack of integrity, an ulterior motive, even just the basic fact of egotism (traditionally cloaked under the desire to Do Good). In a few instances it is something still harder to pin down – in fact Gissing never does nail this one properly: a vague suggestion of male nastiness and "impurity" as opposed to the essential niceness of women. Not that Gissing's books don't contain plenty of nasty women with vaguely unclean secrets of their own: Harriet Smales in *The Unclassed*, with her "scrofula," her drinking habits, her fits, her way of coercing Casti into marriage and her scheming against Ida, is a distillation of female nastiness, as Gissing saw it. In *The Odd Women*, Virginia Madden, though well-intentioned and merely feeble, is another secret drinker, and presently develops "a shrinking, apologetic shyness only seen in people who have done something to be ashamed of." But Gissing's main women, with a few memorable exceptions such as Amy Reardon in *New Grub Street*, can, far more than his men, be divided into goodies and baddies. In his world-picture it is chiefly men who may happen to have, lurking in the background of an otherwise tolerably decent existence, a suggestion of shame and buried guilt on which they prefer not to dwell.

The most obvious source for this in Gissing's own life is, of course, the Manchester disaster.

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This, for Gissing, combined the potent elements of hopes blighted, personal shame (the betrayal of his own private standards), social shame (the betrayal of socially accepted standards, this hurting his family as well as himself) and overtones of sexual "impurity" in addition. It also included the experience of the prison sentence which, in itself, was a thing so unthinkable for a gentleman at that period that Gissing notably failed to make proper use of this unique experience in any of his works. What he saw and felt during that month of hard labour in a common Manchester gaol was evidently a subject so deeply buried in shame and distress that he was unable even to regard it as material for fiction, though other aspects of the Nell-affair were used in his books later, in graphic detail. It is true that a number of his characters do get sent to prison – Arthur Golding's father, in *Workers*, has been there, as a result of poverty and "temptation" in youth; so has Northway in *Denzil Quarrier*; so has Mary Hewett in *The Nether World* (significantly, she is rescued and rehabilitated by marriage with John Hewett); 'Arry Mutimer in *Demos* is also sent there, so is Hugh Carnaby in *The Whirlpool*. But in each case the event is referred to in the briefest factual manner, with painful restraint. There is no revelation of what prison is actually like. Even in *The Unclassed* when Ida Starr finds herself in prison through a false accusation, engineered by Harriet, Gissing indicates the shock of this obliquely rather than describing it through Ida's eyes. Instead, he substitutes Casti's speculations about it:

"He leaned against the great gloomy wall, and thought of Ida. At this hour she was most likely asleep, unless sorrow kept her waking. What unimagined

horrors did she suffer day after day in that accursed prison house?"

The route by which Ida reaches gaol is tortuous, and Gissing was at much pains to make the charge transparently false to the reader and at the same time sufficient to convince the fictional magistrate of her guilt. His brother Algernon, who was then studying to become a solicitor, helped him with legal points. In May 1883 Gissing was writing to him: "I have secured a conviction, but it has been the hardest piece of work I have done for a long time." It is not hard to see all this section of *The*

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Unclassed as a wish-fulfilment re-writing of the writer's own past, with the criminal actually a guiltless victim of mistaken identity, just as the personality and past of Ida herself is a fantasy re-writing of Nell's true nature and history. The Manchester gaol would, one feels, have been much more bearable to Gissing had he been able to see himself there as a heroically persecuted character instead of a shabby and deservedly punished thief.

It is not easy for us to-day to grasp the peculiar horror which Gissing's petty larceny had at the period, both for himself and for others. Twentieth century commentators – socially more sophisticated, and aware of the high incidence of money-thefts in literally any institution – are inclined to underrate the significance of Gissing's lapse *in itself*: they stress only the miserably harsh consequences. For a viewpoint which combines a charitable approach with a full appreciation of the social climate of the period, there is one book written by a comparative nonentity: the Reverend W. Robertson Nicoll's *A Bookman's Letters* (1913). Nicoll knew Gissing slightly; he met him first in September 1894 at a dinner given by Clement Shorter at the National Liberal Club. Ten years after Gissing's death, when the Manchester secret was finally (due to Morley Roberts) a secret no more, he wrote:

"Men who yield easily to other temptations would never under any circumstances yield to the temptation of theft. Even though they were starving they would not pick pockets for money; they would not steal overcoats; they would not steal books. In fact, temptation could not assail them on that side at all. That Gissing gave way on this point was a most calamitous fact. He practically thrust himself outside the pale by these actions, and outside the pale he remained."

In other words, Gissing had not just "sinned" (i.e. in his association with Nell) or even just "committed a crime" – there were certain crimes which gentlemen were known to commit, improperly and disgracefully, to be sure, but without necessarily losing their label of "gentleman." Embezzlement was the gentleman's pecuniary crime of the period, along with its blander cousin "rash speculation": indeed several of Gissing's characters, notably Alma Frothingham's father, are guilty of these. No – what Gissing had so calamitously done was to commit a *working class crime*.

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He had disgraced his family and himself by doing something not just against the law but utterly out of keeping with the class with which the whole Gissing household fervently wished to be associated. In his temporary abandonment of honesty, he had blundered back through those very social barriers which, by dint of work and scholarships, he had himself so laboriously climbed. No wonder that he was to feel after that he had somehow given the game away about himself – that he had betrayed an

essential looseness in his nature, and, at the same time, that if he were to keep this secret trait carefully concealed in future, he would be guilty of a lack of integrity and hence another form of dishonesty. Such, at any rate, is the sense of unease and slightly furtive role-playing that one picks up from many of his characters, from out-and-out charlatans like Dyce Lashmar, through less pernicious versions of the same type – politicians like Denzil Quarrier or Richard Mutimer, men on the make like Jasper Milvain in *New Grub Street*, and Everard Barfoot in *The Odd Women* or the tormented Godwin Peak, to essentially high-minded characters like Reardon in *New Grub Street* or Will Warburton in the late novel of that name. To such a profound and double-edged unease, there is no ready solution.

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Edmund Gosse on *The Whirlpool*

[The relations between Gissing and Edmund Gosse have never been systematically explored though there is certainly enough material for a substantial article about them. P. F. Mattheisen and Arthur Young have studied Gosse's role in the securing for Walter and Alfred Gissing of a pension on the Civil List after their father's death (*Victorian Newsletter*, Fall 1967, "Gissing, Gosse and the Civil List," pp. 11-16), but this is only a small part of the subject. Although Gissing and Gosse were not regular correspondents, they exchanged views on interesting matters like the reading of poetry by the working-classes and some aspects of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. Gosse wrote on Gissing's works on several occasions and Gissing read some of Gosse's books. Also there is some reason to believe that when he revised *Henry Ryecroft* before its publication in book form, Gissing

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made a significant change with Edmund Gosse in mind.

The following is a signed review of *The Whirlpool* which I came across recently while doing some research in the *St. James's Gazette*. It appeared on April 23, 1897, pp. 3-4, under the title "Mr. Gissing's New Novel." It is apparently unknown to Gissing scholars, and the novelist himself does not seem to have been aware of its existence. At least, since he was staying at Budleigh Salterton at that time, he could not record his reading of it in his diary which he had left at Epsom. – P. C.]

We are not sure that Mr. Gissing has not produced in "The Whirlpool" a book which gives his talent a greater title to consideration than it has hitherto won, in spite of its general promise and occasional high attainment. Mr. Gissing and Mr. George Moore are the two survivors of the little band who set out, about fifteen years ago, to introduce into English fiction the methods of the French Naturalistic school. It is probable that these two novelists would reject with indignation the idea that they have anything in common with M. Zola; it is undeniable, however, that their work started from his, however distant it may now appear. In the midst of an artificial study of society, which aimed at idealizing the mountain-peaks of passion, the Realists, whether French or English – or American, for Mr. Howells must not be forgotten, – determined to portray the table-lands of modern existence precisely as they are. And, indeed, oddly as it may sound, the Englishmen have always carried the effort after realism further than the French. M. Zola, as it is now a commonplace to observe, is a fanciful writer, who cooks turnips and cabbages, indeed, but in the stew-pot of a romantic imagination; M. Huysmans has developed into a mystic, M. Rosny into an antiquary. It is only Mr. George Moore and Mr. Gissing who remain true to the positive formula; and when historians of literature come to record the most consistent efforts of the Naturalistic school in

Europe at the close of the nineteenth century, it may be that what they will point to will be not "La Terre" or "Germinal," but "Esther Waters" and "The Whirlpool."

In the new novel Mr. Gissing writes a tragedy of middle-class life, in that section of it which

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hangs on to the professions, yet strives to be independent of them. We do not recollect a book in which the sordid, carking preoccupation with money is more persistently dwelt upon. How to make nine hundred a year give the appearance of a thousand; how to go on living at the edge of an income derived from shrinking dividends; how to satisfy the modern fever for movement and display by a sum which would barely provide in comfort for the old-fashioned genteel inertia – these are the subjects of the novel, and these the passions, or rather the tyrannous instincts which drive its personages round and round in their vortex. When the generation now middle-aged was young, it was Anthony Trollope who seemed the painter of social realities. In his peaceful parsonages and doctors' houses money, or the lack of it, occasionally made itself felt. There were crises, when the pressure was severe, when it was even fatally acute; large sums were sometimes mentioned, perilous speculations described as an awful warning. But money to Anthony Trollope and to George Eliot was only an incident, as to Dickens and the Early Victorians it had been only a romantic circumstance. It is the wearing anxiety, the terrified sickening solicitude about it, which their successors of to-day have contrived to add to their portraits of life; and this feature, in Mr. Gissing's work in particular, is so salient that one is tempted to consider it the most important. He is preeminently the novelist of those who have not quite enough to live upon. And, curiously enough, the only main character in "The Whirlpool" who does not project an image at all, who is quite a shadow, is the millionaire Redgrave. We feel this to be natural; for how can Mr. Gissing take a vitalizing interest in any one who never shudders with apprehension about his income?

The cruelty of insufficient means is most efficiently depicted in the minor character of Cecil Morphew, who constantly reappears in hopeless and infuriated attachment to a certain Miss Winter, whose parents will not permit the match because of Morphew's lack of a sufficient income to support their daughter in luxury. Miss Winter becomes embittered and pietistic; and when, at length, at the close of the story, the obstacles are removed, this girl refuses the lover, who has waited for her so long, on a whimsical conscientious scruple. The whole of this squalid and melancholy

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business, which runs through the background of the story like a dark thread, is very ably designed. But Mr. Gissing has reserved his highest efforts for the portrait of his unhappy heroine, Alma Frothingham. She is the only daughter of a fraudulent speculator; an able amateur on the violin, she is buoyed up with the hope of succeeding as a professional musician, for which she has neither the health nor, perhaps, the talent, though her gifts are considerable. She is an admirably careful study of the modern egotistical woman, anxious to be independent, to be famous, to be talked about, and incurably indifferent to her natural human interests. The curious effect of personal vanity on the spirits of such a woman, the phenomena produced by its disappointments and even its vulgarest indulgences, have rarely been described with so much skill. And yet Alma, with all her faults of character and temperament, is radically so human, and is so singularly unfortunate, that the reader ends by liking her and even by grieving over her inevitable death.

Mr. Gissing's attitude to modern life is pathetic, prosaic, infinitely disillusioned and apprehensive. "Entbehren sollst du, sollst entbehren," breathes from every line. As he has progressed in accomplishment, he has freed himself from a certain monotony of squalor which was

a needless, perhaps even a blameworthy feature; but, on the other hand, a thin optimism (so different, this, from the rich criminal fatality of Zola!) which tempered the early realism, has passed away. Mr. Gissing seems at last to have convinced himself of the fragility of human resolution, of the opacity of human clairvoyance. Blind and brittle, and with exceedingly small balances at our bankers, we gyrate for a few feverish years, clashing against one another, round the roaring and brazen sides of the Whirlpool, only to be sucked down out of sight for ever; while nobody knows and nobody cares. Of this grim and formidable philosophy, Mr. Gissing is the principal exponent among our modern novelists.

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Gissing at the National Book League Again

P. Coustillas

A literary exhibition devoted to the eighteen-nineties was held on the premises of the National Book League, 7 Albemarle Street, London, W1, from the 4th to the 21st of September 1973. Organised by Dr. G. Krishnamurti in collaboration with the staff of the NBL, it was opened on the 3rd of September by Sir John Betjeman, the Poet Laureate, and was the subject of a number of articles and paragraphs in the London Press, especially in the *Times Literary Supplement* (September 21, p. 1092). This was a truly exceptional display – a feat on the part of the organizers and a treat for the visitor. No author of any significance was omitted, and many a one whose name has a meaning only for specialists of the period appeared on the bindings of first editions or on valuable autograph manuscripts. Some visitors doubtless appreciated as I did that stress was not laid exclusively on the ninetyish aspect of the nineties, that is on those writers who fill the pages of Holbrook Jackson's *The Eighteen Nineties*. Thus, Meredith and Hardy and Kipling were represented alongside of Oscar Wilde, John Davidson and Richard Le Gallienne. The two hundred page catalogue compiled by Dr. Krishnamurti, with many descriptions of first editions, quotations from out of the way sources, and transcriptions of unpublished letters by former leading writers, is sure to become shortly a collector's item. Eight plates, one of them a remarkable cartoon of the Ruddkipple, give it additional value. No one should grumble at the price of £2.50 after reading the volume. The 861 items described are divided into (1) anthologies (2) individual authors (3) illustrated books (4) literary periodicals (5) books about the period.

Gissing was very pleasantly represented in this exhibition. The following items were on show: (258) a first edition of *New Grub Street*, 3 vols., 1891, uncut; (259) a presentation copy to Clara Collet of *In the Year of Jubilee*, volume one of the three-volume edition; (260) a first English edition of *The Paying Guest*; (261) a fine poster advertising the American edition of *The Paying Guest* – a colour lithograph, 12" x 19"; (262) a first edition of *Veranilda*; (263) a holograph

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manuscript, the first page of the first draft for chapter one of *Veranilda*; (264) Martin Secker's copy of Swinnerton's study of Gissing (1912). No. 187 was an ALS of John Davidson to Gissing, dated October 15, 1894, and printed in full in the catalogue; No. 284 an ALS from Hardy to Gissing, dated November 5, 1899, and also printed in full; No. 564 a second edition (in fact impression) of

The Private Life of Henry Maitland doubtless much scarcer than the first edition; No. 711 H.G. Wells's first letter to Gissing, not to be found in the volume of correspondence between the two men. Besides, there were a number of books and periodicals containing chapters on or contributions by Gissing, for instance *Chapman's Magazine of Fiction*, *To-Day* and the *Yellow Book*. The more valuable Gissing items came from Chris Kohler's collection.

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Notes on *Our Friend the Charlatan*

P. F. Kropholler

[The edition referred to is the AMS reprint of the 1901 edition published by Henry Holt & Company, New York].

- p. 1, l. 1.

"As he waited for his breakfast, never served to time..." One of several references in Gissing to the unpleasantness of having to wait for a meal.

- p. 2, l. 29.

"... like women in general [she] had no idea of how to rule." A frequent thought in Gissing. On p. 93 of the same novel he remarks that the power of ruling is "the rarest gift in women of whatever rank." Again in the *Commonplace Book* (30) Gissing writes in some detail about the inability of women to rule subordinates.

- p. 4, l. 33.

"Sweet are the uses of disappointment." An adaptation of "Sweet are the uses of adversity" in Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II.I.12.

- p. 40, l. 36.

"fruges consumere nati." From Horace, *Epistles*, I.11.27.

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- p. 41, l. 24.

"Loving the life of the country, studious, reserved, he would have liked best of all to withdraw into some rustic hermitage, and leave the world aside." Like several other characters in Gissing Dymchurch is contemplating what might be called the Ryecroft way of life. Like Ryecroft, Dymchurch finds it necessary to find a justification for "a life of scholarly self-indulgence" (*New Grub Street*, XXVI).

- p. 42, l. 14.

"What is not good for the beehive cannot be good for the bee." Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, book VI.54.

- p. 50, l. 17.

"Would you like to keep villages pretty, and see the people go to the dogs?" This question represents one of the main issues in *Demos*.

- p. 68, l. 5.
“It’s what I’ve been preaching, in season and out of season, for the last ten years.” The Second Epistle of Paul to Timothy, IV.2: “Be instant in season, out of season.”
- p. 69, l. 13
“Nunc dimittis.” From Evening Prayer in *The Book of Common Prayer*.
- p. 71, l. 34.
“Hoc signo vinces.” Words attributed to Constantine’s vision in Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, I.28. Also quoted as “In hoc signo vinces.”
- p. 73, l. 11.
“Sat prata biberunt.” From Virgil, *Eclogue*, III.111.
- p. 73, l. 38.
“... we shall soon be fighting the good fight together?” The First Epistle of Paul to Timothy, VI. 12: “Fight the good fight of faith.”
- p. 90, l. 32.
“... the rule that low-born English girls cannot rise above their native condition.” Obviously based on personal experience.
- p. 92, l. 19.
“... she spoke of Hollingford’s representative as Robb the Grinder...” Lady Ogram’s pun is of
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course based on a character in *Dombey and Son*.
- p. 93, l. 34.
“... from the sublime to the ridiculous.” Attributed to Napoleon I, but a common idiom.
- p. 97, l. 38.
“... the man of hope...” Wordsworth: *The Excursion*, book VII.276: “A man of hope and forward-looking mind.”
- p. 105, l. 38.
“The tools to him who can use them.” Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. IV, *Sir Walter Scott*: “To the very last, [Napoleon] had a kind of idea; that, namely, of La carrière ouverte aux talents. The tools to him that can handle them.”
- p. 107, l. 20.
“– no armed Pallas leaping to sudden life –” : according to Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, Pallas Minerva was represented as clad in a helmet and with drapery over a coat of mail.
- p. 120, l. 35.
“Meminisse juvabit.” Virgil, *Aeneid*, I.203.

- p. 121, l. 30.

“I have heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and wisdom and excellent understanding are found in thee.” The quotation (from Daniel, V.14) is slightly incorrect: “I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee.” Swinnerton (in his *George Gissing*, p. 120) says this character talks like a mixture of Gratiano and Dr. Shrapnel.

- p. 123, l. 5.

“... the monstrous regiment of women...” From the title of John Knox’s pamphlet: *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*.

- p. 123, l. 21.

“As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a fair woman without discretion.” *Proverbs*, XI. 22. Actually: “... a fair woman which is without discretion.”

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- p. 123, l. 25.

“One man among a thousand have I found, but a woman among all those have I not found.” *Ecclesiastes*, VII.28.

- p. 124, l. 8.

“She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life’. *Proverbs*, XXXI.12. The same quotation is very appropriately used in Gissing’s short story *Out of the Fashion*.

- p. 124, l. 10.

“Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.” *Proverbs*, XXXI.31.

- p. 124, l. 20.

“Thou art the Sophist of our time, and list how the old wise man spoke of thy kind.” Plato’s *Sophist* is a sequel to the *Theaetetus*. It describes the character of the sophist as “a charlatan, a hireling, a disputant, no true teacher.” (*The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*).

- p. 124, l. 37.

“Comes it not something near?” Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*, V.III.23.

- p. 125, l. 14.

“honest water which ne’er left man in the mire.” Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*, I.II.61.

- p. 142, l. 11.

“A gentleman of Northampton, a man of light and leading...” This phrase, usually attributed to Disraeli, is referred to in *Denzil Quarrier*, XV.

- p. 155, l. 26.

“... the exciting tenor of his life...” “... the noiseless tenor of their way...” from Gray’s “Elegy” is frequently quoted or adapted in Gissing.

- p. 171, l. 21.

“... he exchanged phrases of such appalling banality that he had much ado not to laugh in his interlocutor’s face.” The inanity of social gatherings is often commented on in Gissing’s novels. On page 196 of the same novel Gissing writes about the foolishness “of hustling amid a crowd of unknown people in staircases and drawing rooms.” Other references occur in

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Isabel Clarendon and Ryecroft, Summer XIII.

- p. 183, l. 14.

“Lashmar must have been of much sterner stuff...” Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, III.II.98: “Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.”

- p. 192, l. 2.

“Discontent, the malady of the age, had taken hold upon him.” Matthew Arnold, a poet whom Dymchurch admired (see p. 364) wrote: “... one thing only has been lent | To youth and age in common – discontent.” (*Youth’s Agitations*).

- p. 193, l. 10.

The quotation is from Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, book V.1.

- p. 194, l. 11.

“... earning bread in the sweat of his brow.” *Genesis*, III.19: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.”

- p. 194, l. 29.

“... his uselessness in the scheme of things.” Cf. Fitzgerald, *Omar Khayyám*, ed. I, LXXIII: “To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire.”

- p. 210, l. 22.

“Dobbin the grocer.” Obviously a reference to a character in Thackeray: *Vanity Fair*.

- p. 211, l. 25.

“At this time they were both reading a book of Nietzsche.” The author of the following lines must have had a fairly extensive knowledge of Nietzsche. In a letter to Bertz dated February 23, 1897, Gissing wrote: “Do you remember speaking to me about the man [Nietzsche] long before he became popularly known?”

- p. 236, l. 7.

“despised and rejected of men.” From *Isaiah*, LIII.3. Quotations from the Bible and the Church of England Prayer Book have been skilfully woven into the Rev. Mr. Lashmar’s speech. Although he was not a religious man, Gissing appears to have had a wide knowledge of the Bible. Even if we allow for the fact that a large part of the Authorised Version has entered the common stock of idioms, biblical allusions and quotations are both numerous and

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appropriate in his work. Actually a “thorough knowledge of the Bible” is listed as one of his intellectual ambitions in the *Commonplace Book*.

It is worth noting that the most convincing condemnation of contemporary charlatanism and materialism is expressed by the clergyman, whose arguments are partly of a religious character.

- p. 236, 1. 32.

“... what the sweet language of the day calls a square meal.” According to the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* the expression “a square meal” was of American origin and is traced back to 1868. That is why Mr. Lashmar must have felt obliged to apologise for its use. Again on p. 239 we find: “... you can’t, again in to-day’s sweet language, ‘run’ the world on those principles.” “To run” meaning “to direct” has been traced back to 1864 and is also of American origin.

- p. 238, 1. 39.

“But what about the fruits of the spirit?” “To bring forth the fruits of the Spirit” occurs in *The Book of Common Prayer* (The Litany).

- p. 239, 1. 18 (and also 1. 39)

“Blessed are the merciful...” From the Beatitudes in St. Matthew, V.3.

- p. 240, 1. 3.

“... the vision, probably, brought with it neither purple nor fine linen.” In St. Luke, XVI.19 we read: “There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.”

- p. 240, 1. 4.

“For curiosity’s sake, Dyce, read Matthew V. to VII before you go to sleep.” These chapters contain several condemnations of Dyce’s charlatanism, e.g. V.37: “But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay...” or VII.15: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing...”

- p. 260, 1. 20.

“Browning was much in her mind.” Perhaps Miss Tomalin had some vague memories of “In a Balcony,” in which an older lady (the Queen) obliges Constance to give up her lover.

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- p. 268, 1. 24.

“... the graven image which she longed to see...” Perhaps vaguely alluding to The Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image...”

- p. 312, 1. 28.

“I hear that you want to break off with Constance Bride. She is no bride for you.” This looks almost like a pun on Constance’s name but in view of the serious context it is probably an unconscious one.

- p. 326, l. 10.
“Happily, he would learn everything from Lady Toplady.” Either the author or the printers must have slipped up here, as the character is throughout referred to as *Mrs.* Toplady.
- p. 341, l. 37.
“... in this struggle it is not the big battalions which will prevail.” A common enough expression which has been traced back to Voltaire. (“On dit que Dieu est toujours pour les gros bataillons”).
- p. 364, l. 17.
“wise passiveness.” Wordsworth, “Expostulation and Reply”: “That we can feed this mind of ours | In a wise passiveness.”
- p. 368, l. 18.
Vor allem haltet euch an Worte!’ The quotation is slightly incorrect: “Im ganzen – haltet Euch an Worte’ (*Faust*, Studierzimmer line 1990).
- p. 379, l. 7.
“... pomp and circumstance...” Shakespeare, *Othello*, III.iii.355: “Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war!”

Although Dyce Lashmar is the title hero of this novel Lord Dymchurch is a far more typical Gissing character. He has several parallels in Gissing. He feels attracted to a life like Ryecroft’s and like Kingcote in *Isabel Clarendon* he is an involuntary witness of his rival’s lovemaking. Like Kingcote Dymchurch is a “superfluous man” in Turgenev’s sense.

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Review: Gissing in Italy

P. Coustillas

GISSING: *The Paying Guest*. With introduction and notes by Francesco Badolato. Treviso, Edizioni Canova, 1973, pp. 127. Stiff wrappers. 1,500 lire.

GISSING: *Six Short Stories*. With introduction and notes by Francesco Badolato. Treviso, Edizioni Canova, 1973, pp. 161. Stiff wrappers. 1,700 lire.

There have been in the last twenty years or so unmistakable signs of interest in Gissing in Italy. Four of his books have appeared in translation – *Born in Exile* in a very fine series published by UTET, *By the Ionian Sea*, a Cappelli paperback now in its third edition, the *Ryecroft Papers* which have run through at least seven editions, and more recently a selection of short stories. Gissing is invariably present in new Italian encyclopaedias, and literary reference books. Also a certain amount of critical attention has been devoted to the author. For instance, Maria Teresa Chialant, a former student of Professor Korg, wrote two long articles which are valuable contributions to Gissing scholarship. The most active scholar, however, has certainly been Dr. Francesco Badolato, a Calabrian whose home at Bovalino Marina was on Gissing’s route to Reggio, but who now

teaches in a secondary school near Milan. Dr. Badolato has not only published *Un'Ispirazione ed altre novelle* (1970), but also written a number of articles and reviews in Italian periodicals and journals, principally *Italia Intellettuale*. His writings have greatly contributed to make Gissing's name better known in Italy.

The present two volumes are a substantial addition to his achievement. So far, only the Japanese had ever thought of using the works of Gissing in the school-room (the number of Japanese editions of *Henry Ryecroft* and the short stories is astounding). From now on, Italian schoolboys and schoolgirls will read Gissing and discover that all his works do not answer to the invariably sombre description of them given by literary histories. Francesco Badolato's choice was a judicious one – *The Paying Guest* is the novelist's most successful attempt at comedy with a

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serious purpose. The story shows structural qualities which give the lie to those critics who would have us believe that Gissing never could emancipate himself from the technique of the three-volume novel. Again, the six short stories are not among those which confirmed the writer's reputation for writing gloomy tales. There is a good deal of social comedy and satire in "Spellbound," "The Schoolmaster's Vision," "The Fate of Humphrey Snell," "The Light on the Tower," "An Inspiration" and "A Victim of Circumstances." To these two booklets, Dr. Badolato has contributed introductions which are informative and accurate; his notes to the texts will make reading easier, and his questions on the stories and suggestions for composition will help master and student alike.

Though these volumes are intended to be used in schools, the adult reader who is not prepared to pay £10 for a first edition of *The Paying Guest* or half that sum for any volume of short stories (with the sole exception of *The House of Cobwebs*) will probably take advantage of the opportunity he is rather unexpectedly offered, to add two moderately priced volumes to his shelves. They show the diligence and enterprise of Canova, especially of their director Dr. Zoppelli. They also raise an inevitable question. What will Dr. Badolato produce next? Though I think I could give a reasonably accurate and comprehensive reply to this question I prefer to assure his well-wishers that he is not altogether idle.

Recent Publications

Volumes

- *Demos, a Story of English Socialism*. With an eight-page introduction by Jacob Korg. New York: AMS Press, 1971. Green cloth. This is a reprint of the 1892 edition published by Smith, Elder. Jacob Korg discusses the political and literary aspects of the novel. Here is a passage which precedes his conclusion: "Though it is rich in novelistic particulars, *Demos* makes an ultimate impression that is general and poetic. While socialism as a theory may have lost its reality for Gissing, he was immensely sensitive to another intangible social force, the power of the

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dispossessed masses of workers. In *Demos* the destructive fury of the poor asserts itself dangerously in varied forms, some subtle and deceptive, others more openly menacing. It is equally present in the 'progress' which begins to transform Wanley into a factory town, in the

greed and indolence that corrupt Mutimer's brother, and in the violence that rages at socialist meetings and demonstrations. In all of these Gissing saw manifestations of the barbarism of a new class that threatened to impose its own vulgarity upon civilization. He freely acknowledges that the poor have been the victims of injustice. But this is treated as a far less significant fact than the presence of great masses of resentful, uneducated slum-dwellers and their destructive energies. The socialist crowd is an important force in *Demos*; Mutimer controls it at first, and Adela holds it back for a moment, but it ultimately shows that it will not be placated or deceived, and strikes its leader down at last. While the novel ends with its people turning their backs upon these problems, and finding peace in the pastoral seclusion of the countryside, it seems clear that their serenity cannot last. We have the impression that *Demos* will erupt eventually and come to Wanley again."

- *The Letters of George Gissing to Edward Clodd*. Edited with an introduction by P. Coustillas. With an appendix "Across the Pyrenees" by Gabrielle Fleury. London, Enitharmon Press, 1973. 120 pages. £3.15. Blue cloth in blue wrappers. Among the contents are 33 letters and postcards from Gissing and seven from Gabrielle Fleury, Algernon Gissing and Morley Roberts, all addressed to Edward Clodd. This edition consists of 450 copies.

Articles, essays, reviews, etc.

- Anon. *Enciclopedia della Letteratura*, Garzanti, 1972. This is a useful volume dealing with the literature of all countries. There is a reliable entry on Gissing, p. 294.
- Anthony Curtis, *Dickens Studies Newsletter*, March 1973, pp. 26-27. A review of P. Coustillas's *Gissing's Writings on Dickens*.
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- George Gissing, "Gissing in America," *Presenting Moonshine*, vol. II, no. 6, May 1973, pp. 16-17. This is a reprint of Gissing's first piece of journalism in America, "'Elaine' – Rosenthal and Tojetti." Doubtless very few people have been able to read this article which was originally published in the Boston *Commonwealth* for October 28, 1876.
- Anon. *British Book News*, July 1973. A review of *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*.
- Charles E. Yenter, "Enitharmon Press Gissing Series," *Presenting Moonshine*, vol. II, no. 7, July 1973, p. 24.
- George Gissing, "Gissing in America," *Presenting Moonshine*, vol. II, no. 8, pp. 20-24. This is a reprint of "A Terrible Mistake," one of the American short stories never reprinted in volume form.
- Michael Collie, "The Lost Realist," *English Studies To-Day* (Fifth Series), Papers read at the eighth conference of the International Association of University Professors of English held at Istanbul, August, 1971. Istanbul, 1973, pp. 359-730.
- Bernard Bergonzi, *The Turn of a Century*, Essays on Victorian and Modern English Literature, London, Macmillan, 1973. The volume contains two essays on Gissing, one on "New Grub

Street” (pp. 45-63), which is a reprint of the introduction to the novel in the Penguin edition, the other “The Correspondence of Gissing and Wells” (pp. 64-71), which appeared originally in *Essays in Criticism*, July 1962, pp. 314-21.