

THE GISSING JOURNAL

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

Volume XXXI, Number 1
January, 1995

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Mr. Harmsworth’s Blue Pencil: “Simple Simon” Revisited

Bouwe Postmus
University of Amsterdam

In September 1893 Gissing met the man whom he hired as his literary agent, William Morris Colles, who, over the next five years was to play an increasingly crucial role in disposing of Gissing’s work, especially his short stories, to a wide variety of editors. Almost exactly a year after their initial meeting, by the end of September 1894, Colles asked Gissing for two more stories, the first of which was written in one long session on October 1, 1894 and forwarded to Colles on the same day. Its title was “Simple Simon” and in an accompanying note Gissing himself described it as “in the lighter vein.”¹ Two days later Colles acknowledged its receipt, adding “this is just what I want. Please let me have as much more of this kind of stuff as you can.”² There may not be any causal link between Colles’ enthusiastic reaction to Gissing’s latest offering and his decision to “drop the Mr.” in addressing his patron – after one year of regular professional correspondence! –

but it is a fact that in his next note Gissing was pleased to reciprocate, thus cementing the terms of friendship between author and agent.

Thematically, "Simple Simon," in its exposure of the hypocrisy of certain vegetarians and teetotallers, is reminiscent of Gissing's earlier satirical treatment of Messrs. Cullen and Cowes in ch. 6 of *Demos* (1886).³ The two men who had vigorously supported Richard Mutimer's indictment of the dangers of alcohol consumption, are last seen enjoying a smoking tumbler and a quiet pipe in their neighbourhood pub. So much for the wide gap between a professed ideal and stubborn reality.

Gissing himself had experimented off and on with vegetarian diets and references to vegetarianism⁴ can be found throughout his letters, in his notebooks and his works. Section IX (Winter) in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* may be seen as a late summary of his views on

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the subject: "I am touched with a half humorous compassion for the people whose necessity, not their will, consents to this chemical view of diet. There comes before me a vision of certain vegetarian restaurants, where, at a minim outlay, I have often enough made believe to satisfy my craving stomach [...] It was a grotesquely heart-breaking sight."⁵

Colles succeeded in placing the story with the *Idler*, a monthly whose editor, Jerome K. Jerome, in another capacity, viz. that of editor of the weekly paper *To-Day*, had previously expressed an interest in publishing a series of brief sketches by Gissing. They appeared under the general title "Nobodies at Home" in *To-Day* for May and June 1895. It was not until May 1896 that Jerome finally got round to publishing "Simple Simon" in vol. IX of the *Idler*. Jerome, who had a reputation for paying late, waited until July 1897, before remitting £5.17.1 (£6.10 less 10 per cent commission),⁶ for a story of just over two thousand words. The manuscript was eventually acquired by Carl Pforzheimer and at present is held by the Lilly Library, Indiana University.

As "Simple Simon" was never included in any of the collections of Gissing's short stories – *Human Odds and Ends* (1898), *The House of Cobwebs* (1906), *A Victim of Circumstances* (1927), *Short Stories of To-day and Yesterday* (1929) and *Stories and Sketches* (1938) – this might at once have been the first and last we ever heard about it, had it not been for a truly remarkable "recycling" of the story in the *Harmsworth Magazine* for December 1900. In a modification typical of its editor, the story appeared under the top-heavy title "Vegetarianism v. Love: The Story of Simple Simon."⁷

Now readers of Gissing's short stories have been familiar since 1990 with the freakish procedures adopted by the editor of the *Harmsworth Monthly Pictorial Magazine* (as it was then called), when Pierre Coustillas in a highly illuminating and entertaining introduction to Gissing's uncollected short story, "A Freak of Nature,"⁸ showed that it was Cecil Harmsworth⁹ who was responsible (if that is the word) for rejecting the mysteriously suggestive original title in favour of the commonplace prosiness of his alternative, "Mr. Brogden, City Clerk," when he published it in February 1899. Not satisfied with the disastrous change of title, Harmsworth then proceeded to an unprecedented hatchet job on Gissing's original text. The alterations range from changes in punctuation and paragraphing, omission of important words, to bowdlerization and the toning down of satire. The one-dimensional text that remained after Harmsworth's blue pencil had done its

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worst, was felt to be a distinct improvement compared to the subtle orchestration of the original. But then Harmsworth was perhaps only too well aware of the limitations of his readers.

History seems to have repeated itself, when we compare the original text of "Simple Simon" as it appeared in the *Idler* with what was left of it after Harmsworth's editorial "corrections." With

Gissing living in Paris in December 1900, there is a possibility that he either did not know of the publication of "Vegetarianism v. Love: The Story of Simple Simon," or found out about it when it was too late anyway. What is significant is that neither in his letters, nor in his *Diary* do we find any reference to money received from Harmsworth in payment of the story. We are inclined to conclude that Gissing was never paid, and that he never saw any proofs either.

Looking in detail at some of the most glaring changes made by Harmsworth, we notice the insensitive deletion of crucial words or phrases. For instance, the omission of "twelvemonth of" in the second sentence altogether removes the mildly ironic statement that it took Mooney and Figg one whole year of sitting opposite one another to become sufficiently acquainted for embarking on their daily dinner appointments. Another adaptation, revealing a fundamental lack of insight into the subtle coherence of the original, occurs when "we'll see who knows best, her or you" becomes "we'll see who knows best, she or you." The phrase is found in Simon's final renunciation of vegetarianism, the longest and most impressive speech he makes. We remember that both men had been introduced to us early on, as "not unimpeachable in the article of grammar" and admire Gissing for gently reminding us of the fact through Simon's mistake. Not so the editor, who rushes in where angels fear to tread. Here is a chance to educate his quarter-educated public; grammatical correctness takes precedence over artistic integrity.

A similar tendency to make explicit what was merely alluded to is found in Harmsworth's wordy periphrasis "his quondam brother in the advocacy of reformed diet" for Gissing's concise "his quondam brother in Pythagoras." This is a good example of the editor's patronizing attempt to remove all traces of ostentatious and needless erudition for the benefit of his readers.

The most inexcusable infringement of Gissing's copy seems to be motivated by the editor's desire to improve the moral tone of the story by removing in its entirety the passage that culminates in Figg's self-confessed drunkenness. He paves the way for this hypocritical and typical act of expurgation by first changing Samuel's "thick voice" into a ludicrously inappropriate, "thin voice"

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and then he excises Samuel's self-incrimination: "Yes, he was intoxicated; he was vilely, vulgarly drunk; he was fit only to be trodden upon and cast among swine. How had it come about? As such things always did – by the damnable way of so-called moderate indulgence. And Samuel tumbled together on the sofa." The tender feelings of Harmsworth's readers must be spared the spectacle of the drunken collapse of this grovelling hypocrite.

Although the damage done to "Simple Simon" is not as extensive as the havoc wrought on "A Freak of Nature," the nature of the editorial interventions is obviously and sadly identical. They are the work of a late-Victorian philistine, whose attitude to art is characteristic of the condescension and commercialization Gissing fought all his life.

Below we print the unadulterated original version of the story as it appeared in the *Idler*, vol. IX, May 1896, pp. 509-514.

Simple Simon

At a vegetarian restaurant, in a room set apart for those who took the sixpenny dinner (two courses and dessert), a pair of friends sat shoulder to shoulder consuming lentil soup. With rare omissions they had sat thus every day for two years; a previous twelvemonth of *vis-à-vis* proximity having led them gently from the nod and the casual remark, by cautious grades of acquaintance, to cordial brotherhood. They were young men, and of means as slender as their persons; clerks by calling, not unimpeachable in the article of grammar, and alike in the fervour of their devotion to abstinent

ideals. Each wore a blue ribbon in the button-hole; each had closely-cropped hair and a meagre moustache; on taking a seat, they invariably hitched up their trousers at the knee.

Their names were Simon Mooney and Samuel Figg. Rugged features, a severe eye, and a trenchant mode of speech proclaimed the character which gave Figg an ascendancy over his companion. He criticised the world with sarcasm, and even in friendship was prone to righteous admonition. Mooney had a mild and pleasing countenance, a frequent smile, a soft conciliatory voice; his good-nature and lack of readiness in retort made him something of a martyr among his fellow-clerks, who called him Simple Simon.

Like the majority of their table-associates, they were thin-faced and colourless; plainly suffering from poverty of diet. But Simon was the less unhealthy of the two. He ate with appetite,

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and talked cheerfully; whilst his friend, who for a long time had been losing flesh and accumulating bile, struggled with the unpalatable dish, and kept a morose silence.

"I feel bad," whispered Samuel, presently; and thereupon left the room.

For some days he was unable to go to business. Simon called to see him each evening, rich in sympathy and eager to aid. Yet at this moment Simon had grave trouble of his own, and felt as sick in spirit as his friend in body. For a year the difficulty had been the subject of discussion between them. Simon was in love, and, alas, with the daughter of a licensed victualler – an eater of flesh, a drinker of ale, a female Gallio in regard to her lover's enthusiasms. Yet a good girl, for all that, and not indisposed to favour Simon's suit would he but waive the conditions on which he had hitherto insisted. They had long known each other, and regularly every week Simon ran down to St. Albans, where Barbara, an only child, abode with her well-to-do parents and assisted in their nefarious traffic. The publican thought well of Mr. Mooney, and had no objection to teetotalism (in this instance), but held for roast-beef. Barbara would renounce neither beef nor ale. So matters stood, and, as the girl's suitors were numerous, poor Simon lived in dread of learning some dark day that his hopes had vanished.

Samuel Figg, even on his bed of sickness, held fiercely to the ideal.

"Now, mind what I tell you, Simon! You're in danger – I can see it. The devil's tempting you to sell your soul. Break it off! Have done with her! If you fall, I'll never speak to you again."

Simon felt the menace keenly.

"I hope I shall never so disgrace myself," he murmured, with downcast eyes and twitching lips. "I've been reading the Temperance Herald, and I find strength in it. But – oh, Figg!"

And the poor fellow turned away to groan.

When Samuel Figg returned to business, he had an air of mystery. The friends met once more at the vegetarian table, but they no longer conversed as of old. Figg had become strangely reticent on the great matters of their common interest; he preferred to talk of things indifferent; chiefly of international politics. Of Barbara he made no mention; and Simon, his native spirits direfully overcast, found it difficult to speak of anything at all, for he interpreted his friend's manner as a dignified rebuke.

"I'm holding firm," he whispered one day, as they left the restaurant.

Figg rewarded him with a smile of unusual brightness.

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"It's your duty to mankind, Simon."

Now as the despairing lover sank from depth to depth, his friend exhibited a wondrous

improvement in state of body and mind. Samuel began to pick up flesh; his eye grew bright and clear; he walked with a lighter step; occasionally, he even laughed. Simon, absorbed in his miseries, hardly observed this change; but, one day, when Figg positively clapped him on the shoulder, and bade him "Cheer up, old boy!" he stared through his smile.

"Thank you, Figg. You're doing your best to keep me up. I'm grateful to you, but – oh, Figg!"

"If you only knew," replied Samuel, "you'd be more encouraged." He frowned and sighed. "What you're going through, Simon, is nothing to what I have to endure. But I bear up – I bear up." He ground his teeth. "Come to my lodgings to-night, and I'll tell you something." He laughed sardonically.

Oppressed by a new anxiety, Simon kept the appointment. He found his friend comfortably seated by the fireside, reading an anti-tobacco tractate. This supplied Figg with matter for half-an-hour's discourse; he wrought himself to a pitch of ferocity in railing against smokers.

"No one has ever yet pretended that smoking is a necessity of health," he said at length. "In fact, it differs from flesh-eating and the taking of stimulants. Now, there *are* cases" – he glowered – "where vegetarianism and total abstinence are practically impossible. Yes!" His voice rose as if in contention. "There *are* such cases, Simon!"

The listener was appalled.

"You really think so?" he stammered. "I thought – you used to –"

A roar interrupted him.

"There *are* such cases; and I – I myself – am one of them."

There was a fearful silence. Thereupon Samuel Figg made known that his improvement in health came from his obeying the doctor who had recently attended him. "Eat and drink like other men, or die!" The painful secret could not be for ever kept. But what it cost him to purchase his life by such concession!

"I shall tell no one but you, Simon. I take meat and beer at a little place where no one knows me; and mind, I can still, with a good conscience, support the great principles. My case goes for nothing; it is exceptional; it doesn't apply to one man in fifty thousand. When I am thoroughly established in health, I shall go back to the right way."

Simon went home and lay awake all night, oppressed with strange, new thoughts. If his friend Figg had been plucked from fatal illness by a change of diet, why, were not Barbara and her father

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and all the rest of the world plainly right in their refusal of asceticism? Barbara, now so rosy of cheek, so round and supple of form, oh! oh! might not the dear girl's health be dependent upon the sustenance he had insisted she should renounce? And he himself? Might he not be twice the man he was if he followed Figg's unwilling example? He knew himself a poor, bloodless creature. He had not the pluck to punch a fellow's head when the nickname "Simple Simon" was thrown at him. Oh! for the blood, and muscle, and courage! Oh, for love and Barbara!

For a week he wrestled with worse temptation than he had ever yet known. Then, in the middle of a sleepless night, he got up and indited a long letter to Samuel. Timorously, circuitously, he approached the awful admission that it seemed doubtful to him whether he ought to make Barbara's conversion a *sine qua non* of their marriage. Personally, he would remain staunch, but why should he seek to imperil Barbara's health? He implored his friend to bear with him, to abstain from wrath.

This letter was posted, and the next day Simon did not go to business. He feared Samuel Figg, and, indeed, felt very unwell. In the evening he had a letter from Samuel, a forcible composition which at first shook him with shame, but, in the end, fired self-respect, and made him think of the

writer as he never had before. No; if it came to calling names, he wouldn't submit; what right had Samuel Figg to use this imperative tone with him? Driven to bay by persecuting circumstance, Simon took a reckless resolve. To-morrow, Sunday, he would go down to St. Albans, and tell Barbara that he resigned all pretension of dictating to her in matters of food and drink; he would offer himself humbly, as a lover should, seeking only for the same liberty of conscience that he allowed her.

He did so, and Barbara smiled upon him – but “without prejudice”; she feared they could not live together harmoniously. She must have much more time to think about it. In brief, the damsel made it clear that she would savour her triumph whilst holding herself quite free from tender obligations. And Simon Mooney returned to town full of the darkest imaginings.

He forsook the familiar restaurant, and kept out of the way of Samuel Figg. The two saw nothing of each other for a fortnight. Then came a letter from Samuel, a brief request that his old friend would call upon him that evening, as he had a grave matter for talk. Simon hesitated, took counsel of dignity, but none the less answered the summons.

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On entering Figg's room he was aware of a strange odour, nay, of blended odours, such as made him doubt the evidence of his nostrils. His eyes completed the shock, and he stood aghast. On the horsehair sofa reclined Samuel Figg, puffing at a cigar; on the table stood a whiskey bottle, and a glass of steaming grog. With obvious effort, Samuel rose to his feet, grinning fatuously, and speaking in a thick voice.

“How do, Shimon? – S'prised, eh? – Doctor's orders, can't help it – no harm in it. – One case in fifty – thousand – ”

“But, Figg, you're – you're – ”

Simon could not utter the terrible word. Rocking to and fro, Figg glared at him.

“I'm *what?* – No, no; d – don't say it, Simon! All a m'shake. What the devil d'you mean? I'm sober's you are, and a good deal more.”

With involuntary steadiness, Simon kept his eye upon the fallen man, and the result of his reproachful look was unexpected. Suddenly Figg dropped from a tone of bluster to one of abject self-rebuke. Yes, he was intoxicated; he was vilely, vulgarly drunk; he was fit only to be trodden upon and cast among swine. How had it come about? As such things always did – by the damnable way of so-called moderate indulgence.

And Samuel tumbled together on the sofa.

For a minute there was silence. Then Simon lifted up his voice, and spoke, for once, like a man.

“Figg, I'm utterly ashamed of you. I'm to take warning by *you*, am I? Not I, indeed! Because *you* can't help making a beast of yourself, you think I'm likely to do the same. Very well; we'll see. So far from taking your advice – *your* advice, indeed – I shall just do the opposite. Here” – he flung up his arm – “here goes vegetarianism! Here” – he repeated the gesture – “here goes total abstinence! I'll give in to Barbara in every single thing, and we'll see who knows best, her or you. I'll do it just to shame you, that I will, after all the names you've called me. It's *you* that ought to take warning, Figg, and I warn you solemnly. Mind what you are about, and when you're sober think of what I've said.”

“Simon! Simon!” shouted the other man; but it was too late. Winged with an indignant purpose, Simon Mooney had sped from the house.

It was yet early in the evening. He made straight for the railway-station, and by nine o'clock was at St. Albans. There, with an energy which transfigured him[,] he told the whole story to

Barbara, and proclaimed himself a liberated man. In proof of it, he supped with the family, ate

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largely of cold pork, and drank a bottle of Bass, then passed the night under the same hospitable roof.

Reaching town in time for business, he was surprised to encounter Figg, who stood waiting for him at the office door.

“Why didn’t you stop, last night?” said Figg, in his ordinary voice. “I stood at the door of your lodgings till one o’clock. Simon, do you really think I was drunk?”

“Of course you were,” replied the other, with newly-acquired decision and severity.

“Then I tell you I was not. The cigar and the whiskey were just a get-up. I acted a part, Simon. I pretended to have fallen so low just to terrify you by my example. I knew that you couldn’t do with safety what I could. But you took it in a way I never expected.”

Incredulous for some minutes, Simon understood at length the veracity and the gigantic conceit of his quondam brother in Pythagoras.

“It’s all right,” he said, quietly. “You did me a greater kindness than you thought. And – be careful, Figg.”

Samuel turned on his heels, and fronted the day’s clerkdom with a brow of night.

¹Letter of 1 October 1894, *Collected Letters of George Gissing*, vol. 5 (Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 1994), p. 240.

²Letter to Algernon of 3 October 1894, *ibid.*, p. 242.

³*Demos: A Story of English Socialism*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1972), pp. 65-67.

⁴In the August-September 1900 issue of *Life and Beauty* the editor published the following letter under the heading “Mr. George Gissing on Vegetarianism”:

To the Editor of “LIFE AND BEAUTY.” Dear Sir, – I have pleasure in stating briefly my own views on the subject of vegetarianism. More than once I have tried to do without meat, for a month or two together; the result, each time, has been such a serious loss of vital force, and such irritation of the temper, that I found it impossible to persevere. I cannot do mental work on a vegetable diet, however good and varied. Neither can I eat *much* flesh. A moderate mixed diet is indispensable to my health and spirits.

On the other hand, I know of more than one person who, as it appears to me, has benefited vastly by ceasing to eat meat; one, in particular, whose life has probably been saved by vegetarianism.

I hold, then, that it is a matter of physical constitution; each case must be judged individually. At the same time, I should much like to see *all* children fed exclusively on vegetable diet—till the moment when any one of them begins to show need of meat. Some would prosper exceedingly – perhaps the greater number. Faithfully yours, GEORGE GISSING.

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⁵London: Constable, 1903, p. 246.

⁶George Gissing, *London and the Life of Literature in late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1978), p. 438.

⁷Vol. 5, December 1900, pp. 497-500.

⁸See George Gissing, *A Freak of Nature or Mr. Brogden, City Clerk*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Edinburgh: Tragara Press, 1990).

⁹Cecil Bisshopp Harmsworth (1869-1948), first Baron Harmsworth, was a brother of Alfred Charles William Harmsworth (1865-1922), later Lord Northcliffe, the well-known newspaper proprietor. Together with their brothers Harold, Leicester and Hildebrand, they were directors of Harmsworth Brothers Ltd, Alfred being acknowledged as the company's founder. Cecil is better known as a politician than as a magazine editor.

T. W. Gissing and Algernon Gissing in the "O.E.D."

John Simpson, Co-Editor
Oxford English Dictionary

[For John Simpson's article on George Gissing in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, see the *Gissing Journal* for April 1993.]

cast v.

1890 Gissing *Village Hampden* I.vii.186 They tell me as the Lammas wheat be a-casting badly.

cry v.

1890 A. Gissing *Village Hampden* III.iii.72 He just cried out a good-night..and set off.

disposal n.

1890 A. Gissing *Village Hampden* I.viii.190 A very tasteful disposal about the granary of flowers..and evergreens.

draw v.

1890 A. Gissing *Village Hampden* III.295 Joice steadily resisted all efforts to draw her out.

drawn ppl. a.

1890 A. Gissing *Village Hampden* II.xi.243 We all live now at swords drawn.

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dunch a.

1889 A. Gissing *Both of this Parish* I.xv.324 William Stretch be a trifle dunch in some of his faculties.

grandfer n.

1889 A. Gissing *Both of this Parish* I.i.21 'E be a good girl to look after your old granfer.

iss *adv.*

1890 A. Gissing *Village Hampden* I.i.19 Iss, Miss – but 'ere her be.

kidneywort *n.*

1854 [T.W.G.] Gissing in *Pharmac. Jrnal.* XIII.459 One of the common names..is kidney-wort.

lead *v.*¹

1890 A. Gissing *Vill. Hampden* II.iv.66 The dance..was led off to the popular strains of the 'Keel-Row'.

look *v.*

1890 A. Gissing *Village Hampden* III.i.15 Read your newspapers; look into the rights of things.

look *v.*

1890 A. Gissing *Village Hampden* II.xii.263 Let us just warn the man, and look over it this time.

pass *v.*

1890 A. Gissing *Village Hampden* III.xi.238 The young man passed off lightly all such reference.

practic *n.*¹

1889 A. Gissing *Both of this Parish* II.vi.135 Accomplished in all the practicks of tilth and tillage.

puck *n.*¹

1889 Gissing *Both of this Parish* I.xii.246 To be a-puckleddden by fancy.

quop *v.*

1889 Gissing *Both of this Parish* I.v.103 It makes a body's heart quop to hear tell of such a history.

strike *v.*

1890 A. Gissing *Village Hampden* II.x.213 They struck their path across the fields.

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strike *v.*

1891 A. Gissing *Moorland Idyl* III.vi.107 His words struck kindred sparks within herself.

they *pers. pron.*

1890 A. Gissing *Vill. Hampden* I.iv.102 I don't understand anything about they.

throw *v.*¹

1891 A. Gissing *Moorland Idyl* II.iv.102 To throw a hand to a drowning man.

turn *v.*

1890 A. Gissing *Vill. Hampden* II.iv.72 He recognised her figure, but never turned to look behind.

turn v.

1890 A. Gissing *Vill. Hampden* II.xiii.273 All faces turned towards him as he rose.

twi- prefix

1889 Gissing *Both of this Parish* II.xxiii.175 I thought it was but a deception o' my twichild, for I be getting aged.

The Critical Response to Gissing in the *Chicago Tribune*

Robert L. Selig
Purdue University Calumet
and Pierre Coustillas

The newspaper that had published Gissing's immature first stories written in Chicago, the *Tribune*, often gave less favorable reviews to his mature later fiction than did other papers in that city. The *Tribune's* collective amnesia about his special connection with its past made it easy at times to savage Gissing's work. But even in positive reviews, the paper's ignorance about the range of his career allowed it to treat such lesser works as *Denzil Quarrier* as signs of promise rather than decline. And although the paper's chief reviewer, Jeannette Gilder, ultimately came to regard his work with qualified respect, her essentially positive comments on *Sleeping Fires* contrast with an anonymous rather hostile notice also in the *Tribune* only sixteen days later – a split-journalistic decision resembling Clement Fadge's amusing debacle in *New Grub Street* when he publishes two

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opposing reviews of the very same book. By the time of Gissing's death, the *Tribune* had at last begun consistently to praise him as a writer whose works would live.

Anon., "To-Day's Literature," *Chicago Tribune*,
February 13, 1892, p. 13
(reprinted in the *Literary News* for March 1892, p. 74)

Denzil Quarrier. Mr. George Gissing's latest effort. It is a Strong and Impressive Though Not a Great Work – He Dispenses with Poetic Justice, Triumphant Virtue, and the Conventional Happy Ending – The Characters in the Book Analyzed.

Whether or not Mr. George Gissing is the "coming man" among English novelists is perhaps too early to decide. *Denzil Quarrier*, his latest effort, is a strong and impressive, though not a great work. One swallow does not make a summer, and *Denzil Quarrier*, promising a story as it is, affords but a partial test of its author's capacity.

The omens, however, are decidedly favorable to Mr. Gissing. The future historian of English fiction may possibly regard this novel as more truly significant and representative, more genuinely a product of the age than many a finer and more famous work. For Mr. Gissing swims with the

stream; consciously or unconsciously, he is animated by the Time-spirit and receives and transmits the influence that rules the hour. In matters intellectual the one dominant characteristic of the age is its naturalism. Not the naturalism of Zola, but the naturalism of Goethe and Arnold; the craving to get at the root of things, to “see clear and think straight;” the demand that a term shall answer to some reality; the disposition to ignore the claims of authority, and to ask, “But is it so? Is it *so for me*?” Realism in fiction is only one of the currents of this great stream, and – dare we say it? – it is not the main current. A writer may call himself a realist and yet be steeped in illusions. A “sad sincerity” is the true note of the naturalism of our day; pessimists we are not; to the optimists we say with Montaigne “Que sçais-je?” Optimism itself has been transformed; Browning we call an optimist, but Browning’s Christian Stoicism, or Stoical Christianity – the latter is perhaps the better phrase – would have disgusted our grandfathers. Half-tones have succeeded for a while the strong lights and vivid colours of pre-scientific days.

This low key is characteristic of *Denzil Quarrier*. Poetic justice, triumphant virtue, the conventional “happy ending” – with all of these the author dispenses. The story has tragic elements, but it is not pure tragedy. The victims do not “breast the pressure of life.” Rather they seek to evade it, and when at last the “fell Sergeant,” Nemesis, makes her “strict arrest” her methods reflect scant credit on the Detective Bureau of Olympus. The gentle, girlish heroine, who bears the sweet and significant name of Lilian, pays the penalty of a false position. She is needlessly sacrificed in a conflict of love and ambition – needlessly, since, in spite of her misgivings, Quarrier loves her sincerely, would at any time account “the world well-lost” for her sake. Quarrier himself is

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admirably drawn. Honest, impulsive, sanguine, self-assertive, hopelessly deficient in tact and finesse, he is an excellent specimen of a kind-hearted, blundering Englishman.

Simply and directly told, the story is an excellent bit of work, regarded from a technical standpoint. The author has no hobby to ride, no mission to fulfill; our own remarks in reference to his *fin de siècle* attitude are not warranted by any superficial indications. Mr. Gissing does not write for the tyrannical “young person”; to mature and intelligent readers, however, his book may be heartily recommended.

Anon., “In Prose and Verse,” *Chicago Tribune*,
10 August 1895, Part II, p. 2

In the Year of Jubilee is a drearily realistic novel – drearily realistic, one repeats, for that characterizes it – by George Gissing, an English novelist who has the photographed faculty of our W. D. Howells, with his industry also, but without his polish of style and dew of humor. There are signs of power in George Gissing’s work, and, therefore, it should be noticed with commendation, though one would hesitate to recommend it as a diverting story. The tale is sordid. It deals with the fortunes of two middle-class families in London, hopelessly vulgar in essence, and emphatically vulgarized in their younger members by a smattering of education. The moral lesson Mr. Gissing conveys is that the increase of wealth and diffusion of education in the nineteenth century have not, thus far, resulted in the improvement of the race. This would be a short-sighted thesis in a scientific essay, but it suffices in a novel. Mr. Gissing, having everything his own way, choosing his own materials to work with, easily proves his case. One reads his book with the conviction that his London middle-class folks, deranged by half education, which has made them discontented with their surroundings without bettering them morally and socially, and by the possession of money beyond their needs, are true types. But truth is not necessarily beauty, and this novel is certainly not

beautiful. Here is a description of the three sisters French, the daughters of a Camberwell builder, lately deceased. To each had fallen a patrimony just sufficient for their support in elegant leisure: [a paragraph-long quotation follows from the beginning of Part One, ch. II.]

Anon., "Books of the Day," *Chicago Tribune*, February 8, 1896, p. 14

George Gissing's little story, "The Paying Guest" (Dodd, Mead & Co.) is not too complicated and exceedingly British. In the differentiation of character may be noted a promise of better in the sense of more complete work hereafter.

Jeannette Gilder, "*Sleeping Fires*. By George Gissing,"
Chicago Tribune, February 23, 1896, p. 42

George Gissing is one of the young men whose books are talked about in London. They are read also, I suppose, but it is not always necessary for an author to be a popular favorite to get

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paragraphed in the London papers. Mr. Gissing began by writing short stories about common people. They were not immoral in the sense that Hubert Crackanthorpe's stories are, but they were unnecessarily low. I am too great an admirer of Dickens to object to low life in literature, but a story of low life must have something besides lowness to attract me.

Since those first stories Mr. Gissing has improved his surroundings, or, rather, the surroundings of his heroes and heroines. There has been a reaction in the matter of vulgarity, and yellow book literature is not as popular as it was. Mr. Gissing has probably observed this and his new story, "Sleeping Fires," a novelette, which the Messrs. Appleton have nearly ready for publication, is in his improved manner. He still, however, shows his leaning towards the unspeakable.

The hero of this story, Edmund Langley, was the father of an illegitimate child, and he can see nothing objectionable in that fact. He talks about the hot-headedness of youth and all the rest of it, and when the true story is told the reader finds that there was no hot-headedness about it. A more cold-blooded arrangement it would be hard to imagine. Langley apparently was not the least bit in love with the woman, nor she with him. She simply wanted to pique another lover, whom she married later, and who was good enough to let her keep the child. In the meantime Langley does fall in love with a beautiful and clever girl in his own walk of life. Before declaring himself he confesses his sin to her father, thinking it the wisest plan.

[Here follows a long quotation from ch. 3, ending with Mr. Forrest's promise to consult his wife as "Women think differently."]

"Women think differently" – unreasonable of them, is it not? As her husband suspected, Mrs. Forrest would not think of Langley as a son-in-law, and she furthermore declined to tell the disgusting story to her daughter. At this Langley felt deeply hurt. He considered it most unkind treatment and condoned with himself as an ill-used man and cursed his folly in confessing his story to Mr. Forrest. After brooding for a while he wrote to the girl and offered himself, and to the father, telling him that he had done so. To both letters he received cold and formal replies. Then he cut loose from England and traveled on the continent.

Many years after his rejection by Agnes he met in Athens a young man of 18 whom she had adopted. Langley took to the boy at once. The reader does not have to be told that he was Langley's son. This is no surprise, but subsequent events are. The boy is a "modern," despising university

education, wealth, rank, and everything that the “modern” young man is supposed to despise. He is intensely enthusiastic and ends by eating out his young heart.

Mr. Gissing has made a readable story, avoiding the dramatic situations that are suggested to the reader’s mind, which is something of a novelty.

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Anon., “Books of the Day. Moral: Don’t Be Too Honest. *Sleeping Fires*.
By George Gissing. D. Appleton & Co.,”
Chicago Tribune, April 11, 1896, p. 13

In his latest story Mr. Gissing has partly broken away from his favourite vulgarities of English middle life, and by the aid of much artistic sophistry has achieved a fairly pleasing result from not altogether pleasing materials. *Sleeping Fires* is the tale of a man, Langley, who commits a youthful folly, frankly tells it later to the father of the woman he expects to marry, and in consequence spends the next sixteen years of his life wandering aimlessly over the earth and cursing – not his early sin, but his folly in making it known. The book is a covert sneer at frankness in dealing with a conventional world.

The girl who loved Langley married a lord, and is becomingly unhappy. The scene shifts to Athens, and Mr. Gissing’s descriptions of Greek ruins and mountains form an attractive background upon which to portray the revival of the sleeping passion in Langley’s breast through the acquaintance of an impetuous youth who proves to be his son, and whom Lady Revill, his former sweetheart, had adopted. The means employed by Langley for weaning the boy from an infatuation for an older woman suggests the author’s close acquaintance with Pendennis and his wise uncle, the Major.

The successive steps by which Langley and Lady Revill finally approach the altar, through a common affection for the boy, who dies, show that Mr. Gissing is improving in power and in grasp of human motives. But the author’s ill-conceived contempt for the “old prejudices” and “petty hypocrisy” which forbid a woman to overlook the fact of a would-be lover’s illegitimate child is unpleasantly apparent. With all its sugar-coating of strict propriety the book smacks of potential vulgarity.

Anon., “Mr. Gissing’s Leaden-Hued World. *The Whirlpool*. By George
Gissing. Frederick A. Stokes Company,” *Chicago Tribune*,
8 February 1898, p. 10

Life as seen through George Gissing’s spectacles is a strenuous and somber affair. Being a pessimist and a realist, he believes in throwing the light of his talents only upon the unlovely and solemn aspects of life. And being an ambitious man and a novelist of considerable power, he manages to hold one to his pages long enough to make one thoroughly low-spirited.

As able and interesting joy killer, *The Whirlpool* is surpassed only by *The Christian*, which it in some respects resembles. Mr. Gissing, like Mr. Caine, deals in nothing so frivolous as humor. There is barely enough time between the cradle and the grave to be serious and dull in, so there is naturally none to waste in laughter. This is the view Mr. Gissing takes. He began on the theory when he was writing his first harrowing novels of sordid middle-class life. He continues in the same strain now that he has essayed a novel dealing with the maelstrom of idle moneyed society in London’s social whirlpool.

“The whirlpool!” mutters one of the characters in this book, with a broken laugh. “It’s got hold of me, and I’m going down, old man – and it looks black as hell.”

The figure of the maelstrom is kept up all through this needlessly long novel. It reappears again and again, and the impression is realistically impressed upon the reader by the fact that the book is scarcely more than a maze of eddying events, the only connection between which is that they all revolve around some unseen central funnel of sin and death. But who is going to disappear into the sucking gulf is not apparent until almost the end. Until then all one is sure of is that things are whirling and that somebody is like to come to grief, and that it would be a relief to have the unhappy event done and disposed of a couple of hundred pages sooner.

The author’s object seems to have been to photograph a section of the seething social life of London at the point just beyond the bourgeois line. Harvey Rolfe and Alma Frothingham, whose life story forms the main current of the narrative, are people who have at least a comfortable income without working. But the strenuousness of the struggle for a livelihood plays a large part in the book, especially in the lives of the minor characters. And even in the case of Alma the straining after notoriety and applause furnishes the dominant note of seriousness.

The story opens with a painful scene, in which Alma’s father, a banker, commits suicide upon the failure of his bank and the ruin of his creditors. This is quickly followed by a harrowing interview with the widow of one of the chief losers, who has suddenly been found dead from an overdose of morphine. Mrs. Abbott, the widow, has called Harvey Rolfe, her dead husband’s friend, to unburden her self-reproaches to him and to plead with him to say he does not believe her husband was a suicide. The friendly interest that Rolfe takes in Mrs. Abbott later becomes a motive of jealousy for Alma when the latter becomes his wife.

After the disaster to her father’s fortunes Alma decides to use her amateur skill as a violinist for earning a livelihood. She goes to Germany to study. There she gets three proposals of marriage from three Englishmen. One is from a questionable song writer named Dymes, another is from a rich man named Redgrave, and the third is from Harvey Rolfe, a respectable gentleman of leisure. The first two are rather insults than proposals. But Rolfe’s is a manly and straightforward proposal of marriage, on the new-fangled basis of equal rights for both in the marriage bond. If Mr. Gissing’s novel can be suspected of having any purpose it is to prove that this sort of marriage can lead to nothing but trouble and disaster. His theory would seem to be that, as one of his characters expresses it, the only successful husbands are those with courage enough to beat their wives.

Upon their marriage Harvey and Alma decide by mutual consent to withdraw from the whirlpool of London life and to live modestly and economically in Wales. For a couple of years this succeeds very well. But, despite the coming of a child to enliven the home, Alma gradually becomes restless, dissatisfied, and ill. So by mutual consent they return and live in London.

The main incident of the novel makes its appearance when Alma becomes bent upon taking up her violin again professionally and giving a grand recital, and persists to the end against her husband’s wishes. To carry out her project she engages her former suitor, Dymes, as her press agent, and soon finds it necessary to get the support of the rich and smooth seducer, Redgrave. Both men get her into their power, and she becomes daily more seriously compromised.

Just here the most dramatic episode of the book occurs. Hugh Carnaby and his wife are two of the most prominent and certainly two of the most likeable characters in the story. But Carnaby’s mind has been poisoned by a slander connecting his wife’s name with Redgrave. In visiting

Redgrave's private grounds at night he sees the man talking to a woman, and, believing her to be his wife, he strikes Redgrave to the ground with his fist and kills him. Imagine his feelings upon discovering that the woman was not his wife at all, but Alma Rolfe, his friend's wife.

The remainder of the story – Carnaby's trial and imprisonment, his silence about Alma's indiscretion, and the gradual deterioration of Alma, assisted by the formation of the morphine habit – need not be detailed. Her final departure from this vale of tears by means of an overdose of morphia is neither dramatic nor artistic. Nor is it in any way satisfying, save that it brings the book to an end.

Once in a while Mr. Gissing manages to touch somewhere near the heartstrings that vibrate at the sound of pathos, as where little Hughie comes to his father and says: "Father, Louie says that baby is dead. Father, I don't want baby to be dead. Don't let baby be dead!" But the story as a whole takes little hold either on the heart or on the head. Alma's character, on which the action turns, is somehow not quite real. The general impression of the book is that of actual life, but Alma's motives lack that touch of human naturalness, either for good or for evil, that would bring her and her husband heart to heart with the reader.

Mr. Gissing must be acknowledged as a dignified and able writer – a force to be reckoned with – but he has as yet shown no literary talent approaching that of Hall Caine, whom he resembles in his somberness but not in his power to raise the somber into something imposing and commanding. *The Whirlpool* is a book that one may read with interest but never with healthful delight.

Anon., "Discriminating Essay on Dickens by George Gissing,"
Chicago Tribune, 18 April 1898, p. 8

Remarkably Fine Study Which Answers Captious Criticism of the Great Novelist and
Insists upon His Claim to Continued Recognition – Charge That He Was a Mere
Caricaturist Flatly Denied – His Books as Expressions of Natural Life

Any author who has enjoyed a wide popularity, and one that flows back upon him in a feeling akin to worship, is bound to suffer from a reaction. It was so with that most popular of essayists, Macaulay. In his own time he took the English speaking world by storm. His admirers would admit

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no flaw in his work. The wonderful style which brooked no opposition fortified all his literary judgments and made them seem final.

Then there grew up a new school of historical writers who founded themselves on German models, and constantly intimated that they were very, very deep. Their adulation of the Germans becomes nauseating, and one would never think to read them when the Teutonic furore there was a still unrivaled Gibbon, who had been born and brought up on English soil before the Germans had been heard of. The criticism of the leaders of this school, Freeman, for example, does justice to Macaulay, but all the camp followers insisted out of their immeasurable depths that he was shallow. His moving style they dismissed with a supercilious wave of the hand. They condemned him because he was clear and intelligible, because anybody could understand what he said. Hence for a considerable period it was the fashion of literary prigs of all sorts and conditions to cry him down.

The reaction ran its course. In the end it was far more irrational than the original Macaulay craze had been. It was itself condemned by authority and ceased to dominate small organs of criticism as it had done. It can hardly be doubted now that Macaulay will be a read classic instead of

a dead classic for many years to come and that his essays and his history will delight future generations even as they delighted his contemporaries, though, of course, there must be new work for the new time.

These reflections occur upon a reading of George Gissing's *Charles Dickens* (Dodd, Mead & Co.), because there is a certain parallelism in the case of Macaulay and Dickens that is likely to become more apparent still as the years go by. If no author ever received a greater meed of irrational praise than Dickens it is equally true that no author ever suffered more from irrational condemnation. There are critics of the prig variety who assert that his works are nothing more than a great gallery of grotesques. Even his humor has not escaped denunciation. He is too boisterous, say some, and therefore vulgar and shocking. Others there are who adopt a condescending tone when speaking of this great master, and refer to him briefly, slightingly, with a half-pitying smile, as if he and his books were buried together.

Mr. Gissing's essay and estimate is rebuke to all such criticism without being in any sense a partisan plea. Indeed, it is rather a positive exposition than a defense or a challenge. It contains no wrangling, controversial matter, and the temper and spirit in which it is written are admirable. The author is by direct confession, as well as by the evidence of his comment, an enthusiastic lover of Dickens, yet in the few instances in which he notices the enemy he does so dispassionately and without desire to provoke further hostilities.

His book comes just at the time when adverse criticism has done its worst. Whether the multitude has ever been seriously affected by it is doubtful, but it has had an unmistakable effect among that class of people who make it a practice to keep up with current critical theories. Judged by these theories, Dickens would have no standing in court. There is not an up-to-date "ism" that he

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can possibly satisfy. He is neither realist, naturalist, or romanticist.

Mr. Gissing finds that his greatest weakness is in his construction, with its melodramatic stage tricks, and lack of anything resembling consistency or artistic finish. For this he thinks there are two causes: first, the novelist's passion for the stage, and, second, the hurry of the publication in monthly numbers, which precluded forethought and form. The books were thrown together and the popular reception of one number had its effect upon the subsequent ones, since the author was nervously sensitive to the feeling of his public. That of itself is enough to mark him out as no artist, declare his contemnors, but Mr. Gissing does not think so. He does not believe that you can thus dispose of a writer who was a devotee to his work, who gave to it all he had of heart and brain, whose genius included the infinite capacity for taking pains and much besides.

The explanation of his sensitiveness to public opinion is not found in a willingness to abandon high motives for low ones, in eagerness for a money reward for its own sake, but in the demand of his highly emotional nature for a community of feeling between himself and his readers. Here he was like the actor who must have his audience with him. The method may involve a sacrifice of art, but it does not justify the ignoring of all the marvelous art that remains in spite of it.

To the charge that Dickens drew caricatures, not characters, Mr. Gissing makes this reply:

[a one-paragraph quotation follows.]

There are very prosaic people who will look upon the most abnormal types with little or no emotion. They can express all that they feel in the word "queer," and think no more of the matter. Types varying but little from the normal would not hold their attention for a moment. But if an author were to represent humanity as these people see it, the dullness of his books would be appalling, nor would the truth appear in such a perspective. The humor, the imagination, the fancy of Dickens, help us to realize what manner of man he is discussing as no ordinary description could.

It is easy to note the play of the fancy and to distinguish behind it a wealth of accuracy in details which was possible only to the most observing of men.

Mr. Gissing does full justice to Dickens's humor, to his pathos and satire, and to his vivid descriptive powers. With no less of justice he ought to have eulogized his genius for infusing a dramatic interest into his stories which cannot be classed with the tawdry melodramatic. Our author objects to one famous episode in *Oliver Twist* that the fugitive Sykes, a common London burglar, could never have used such an expression as "wolves tear your throats." Perhaps not, but the fervor of the account of that chase after the murderer communicates itself to many who are not with the boy in the gallery. No writer in the language has anything like the number of intensely dramatic passages that may be found in Dickens, and none equals him in his finest work of this kind.

Mr. Gissing had much to say of Dickens' environment, of the England of his day, especially the England of the lower middle class, from which he sprang and which constituted the greater part

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of the English people. He finds in him the true expression of national life and sentiment, notes his complete independence of all literary schools, and his truth to himself, and adds: "The likelihood is that his unwavering consistency will stand him in better stead through the century to come than any amount of that artistic perfection, which only a small class can appreciate and enjoy."

There is no doubt that time is more likely to crown him than it is to crown any of his hostile critics. It is a misfortune not to have read and enjoyed him, and it is a pleasure to read such a highly laudatory and yet so discriminating and just an essay upon the novelist as this of Mr. Gissing. Lovers of Dickens will welcome it, and the critics will find it hard to answer if they keep close to the whole truth.

Anon., "A Misty Tale of Woe. *The Crown of Life*. By George Gissing.
Frederick A. Stokes Company," *Chicago Tribune*,
11 November 1899, p. 10

It is a rather dolorous group of people that Mr. Gissing has created for his latest novel, and the somber tone in which the story is written is seldom relieved by flashes of humor or gayety. Of course, the "crown of life" is love, and its attainment is attended with the woe and misery that so often accompany crowns.

The hero of the story is an English youth, Piers Otway, who is preparing for civil service examinations and studying fourteen hours a day in his little room at the home of his friends, the Hannafords. This is an unhappy family. Mr. Hannaford is an inventor and collector of weapons and explosives, but he uses only damp powder in the domestic quarrels between himself and wife. He hates his wife, who returns the feeling, and who sometimes looks to suicide as the only means of escape from the despised bond. Their daughter Olga is possessed of a "fatigued complexion," and the artist to whom she eventually becomes engaged is "chronically tired," and his breath "wafts alcoholic odors."

When we first meet this doleful family the domestic gloom is about to be relieved by the visit of a favorite niece, Irene Derwent, whose character is as full of charm and gayety as her relatives are of the opposite of these qualities.

When Piers first meets Irene he realizes at once that she is the only woman who can crown his life, and his despair of ever attaining her drives him from his books and sends him eventually to Russia. He seems always to be haunted by loneliness and solitude, and once in the hopelessness of ever winning the woman he wants he offers himself to one that he doesn't want. This one happens

to be Olga, who has broken with the tired artist. But the girl refuses him, and in the end he wins his crown, a fact which, in the minds of many readers, will compensate for much groping about in gloom.

There are many minor characters, all more or less connected with the fortunes of Piers, but they are not skillfully drawn and do not illuminate the story. The whole novel seems to suffer for lack of light, and is enveloped in a kind of fog which the author's diffuse style is not calculated to dispel.

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Anon., "A Successful English Novelist. George Gissing [accompanied
by a sketched portrait of Gissing]," *Chicago Tribune*,
24 August 1901, p. 9

Mr. George Gissing, the novelist, whose books seem equally popular on both sides of the Atlantic, is at present in a state of ill-health which alarms his friends. He has gone to many places without bettering his condition. Mr. Gissing is a novelist with a distinct style and strong characteristics. *The Emancipator* [sic] was the first book with which he attracted attention. *The Whirlpool*, and still later *Our Friend the Charlatan*, increased his reputation considerably. The last named is certainly a strong and entertaining bit of work. The part of Dyce Lashmar is a familiar type of the ambitious, selfish "reformer," too lazy to realize his ambitions and not clever enough to succeed as a scoundrel. Such a man, with a smattering of knowledge easily becomes a charlatan, harmless and superficial.

Jeannette L. Gilder, "Book News from America, England, and
France," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 28 February 1903, p. 13

Mr. George Gissing, who has written several novels as well as an appreciation of Dickens, has written a new book called *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, which will soon be published by Messrs. E. P. Dutton & Co. Mr. Gissing plays off in a preface and would seem to indicate that Henry Ryecroft was a real person whose papers he is editing, but we know better; we know that it is Mr. Gissing who is writing. We are not to be deceived, nor do I think that he intends that we should be, for the title page reads "*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, by George Gissing." Not "edited by," but "by." His preface is not unlike the preface supplied by "S." to the *Journal of Arthur Stirling*. The preface to the latter mentioned the obituary notices of Stirling which had appeared in certain New York papers. The preface to *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* begins by saying: "A year ago obituary paragraphs in the literary papers gave such account of him as was thought needful," etc. Then Mr. Gissing goes on to say how the duty of examining Ryecroft's papers fell to him. He tells us that when he first knew him Ryecroft had reached his 40th year; for twenty years he had lived by the pen. He was, like Arthur Stirling, a struggling man, beset by poverty and other circumstances unpropitious to mental work. Many forms of literature had he tried; in none had he been conspicuously successful. He was a man of independent and scornful outlook. He had suffered much from defeated ambition, from disillusion of many kinds, from subjection to grim necessity. He did a great deal of mere hack work; he reviewed, he translated, he wrote articles, at long intervals a volume appeared under his name. There were times when bitterness took hold upon him, and he suffered from ill-health. Unlike Stirling, Ryecroft's last years were spent in comfort. A friend died and left him an annuity of £300. This, to an unmarried man in England, was riches. He moved into the country and spent his time out of doors and in his library, and there he wrote the book that

we are invited to read.

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I have seen it hinted in the English papers that there is much of Mr. Gissing's own life in these private papers, but that is always said when a man writes in this personal strain. While I don't suppose there is any doubt about Mr. Gissing being the author of this book, at the same time it is not much like his other work. It is written largely about out of doors, and is divided into four books, named after the four seasons. One can imagine nothing more inspiring to this sort of work than the environments of Henry Ryecroft. There in a little home in Exeter he wrote as the spirit moved. There is nothing prettier in the book than the description of his home:

[Here comes a three-paragraph quotation from Spring II.]

Elia W. Peattie, "Gissing's Posthumous Novel..."
Chicago Daily Tribune, 28 January 1905, p. 7

George Gissing's posthumous novel, *Veranilda*, is just about to be published by Messrs. E. P. Dutton & Co. This is the unfinished story about which there has been so much preliminary talk. Mr. H. G. Wells was invited to finish the story and write its introduction. He wrote the introduction, but it was not acceptable to the friends of Mr. Gissing and was, therefore, thrown out. After the displacement of Mr. Wells, Mr. Frederic Harrison was chosen for the work, which now appears with his introduction – a short one compared to that of Mr. Wells. As to the two or three missing chapters, he considers that they are not indispensable to the book as a work of art. So they were not written by another hand; which seems to me decidedly the wisest course to have taken in the matter. "Not only was the writer cut off at the age of 46, before this romance was in type," writes Mr. Harrison, "but he did not live to bring it to its natural close. It is printed by those he left behind him from his papers in the state in which they were found. There were no adequate materials to show how he had designed it to end. And it was out of the question to attempt to supply what he was not permitted to complete." Then Mr. Harrison goes on to say:

"It is not at all a torso – a trunk without limbs or head. It is a finished piece of sculpture, from which some portions have been broken off and lost. To the thoughtful reader this lacuna will but add to the pathos and the charm of this singularly original book."

Veranilda is a story of Roman and Goth, an historical romance constructed on a plan most unusual. It deals with real historical personages and actual historical events; and it is composed after long and minute study of the best contemporary sources and what remains of the literature of the time. The scene is laid in the sixth century, the age of Justinian and Belisarius, a time of which the general reader, as Mr. Harrison truly remarks, knows almost nothing. Mr. Harrison, however, does know a good deal on this subject, and he finds that he has been fascinated as he read the proofs of *Veranilda*, which he judges to be "far the most important book which George Gissing ever produced; that one of his writings which will have the most continuing life."

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Nothing could be further from the style of Gissing's other stories than this Roman tale. His earlier works were more in the line of Dickens; that is, he wrote of the lower walks of life – of the sordid doings of plain people. But his books lack the humor of Dickens; indeed, they lack much that gave Dickens's novels their fame. They were only like Dickens in subject and in their realism.

I doubt if *Veranilda* will ever become popular. I doubt if any novel that is known to be

unfinished has ever been popular. But at the same time, there are more of the elements of popularity in this story than anything of Gissing's that I have read.

Anon., "Among New Books," *Chicago Tribune*, 6 July 1905, p. 6

There is always something sadly interesting attached to a posthumous book by a popular author, and *Will Warburton*, by the late George Gissing, is no exception to the rule. It is called "a romance of real life," and so it is. There is not an exaggerated phrase or character in the whole book. It might be transcribed from London life today.

The hero is one against whom fate seems to have a grudge, but he wins happiness in the end, and, although it is a modest future he faces, much more modest than he once might have desired, still it is real happiness. There is some good character work in the book, and Bertha Cross, whom Will chooses as his mate, is not the worst by any means.

Elia W. Peattie, "Reviews of Current Publications,"
Chicago Daily Tribune, 6 October 1906, p. 13

There is something wonderfully tenacious in the manner in which English men of letters cling to all that came from the prolific pen of the late George Gissing. Seldom, nowadays, does any sort of work appear bearing his name upon the title page that it is not accompanied by some manner of biographical and critical preface. The latest volume of Gissing's work to be offered to the public is composed of short stories appearing under the title, *The House of Cobwebs* (E. P. Dutton & Co.), and this is no exception to the rule mentioned above. An interesting "introductory survey" by Thomas Seccombe tells sympathetically of the struggling, lonely life of this diffident man of letters, whose observation had the accuracy of a camera and whose intellect and heart were warmed with goodness and talent and understanding.

The short stories in *The House of Cobwebs* are sketches rather than tales. They depict incidents in the lives of a number of quite ordinary, everyday men. Gissing has the effect of turning a philosophic, scientific, not unkindly regard upon the neighbors – his neighbors, or yours, or mine. Stevenson might have envied him his precision, Dickens would have applauded his accuracy, Thackeray congratulated him upon his gentle satire. Yet, being of the company of all these men, he is not the peer of any of them. But, so curious a thing is human intellect and so diverse are the talents of men, that after the last tribute had been offered to Gissing by these immortal Englishmen,

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there would remain certain qualities of his work which Honoré Balzac would have appreciated better than any of these.

The following is not taken from one of the stories in the book, but is an illustration of what is meant by the above:

[A three-paragraph quotation follows from *Thyrza*, ch. 9, describing Grail's observation of slum children as they dance to a street organ.]

The beauty of Gissing's work is that, sympathetic though it is, it does not at any time sink into that slough of sensibility in which Dickens, in his unfortunate moments, liked fairly to wallow, and into which he was followed by an innumerable company of lachrymose readers. There is every indication that the work of George Gissing will continue to arrest the attention of scholarly readers. The celebrity which is to come to him, one ventures to predict, is greatly in excess of that which he knew during his life.

[Professor Selig's work on this article was facilitated by a Scholarly Research Award from Purdue University Calumet.]

The 1894 Booker Prize

Pierre Coustillas

If there had been a Booker Prize one hundred years ago, what newly published novel would have been the winner? Such was the question that Hilary Laurie, Publishing Director of Everyman Paperbacks, asked herself early last year when, at the suggestion of her colleague Ion Trewin, of Weidenfeld & Nicolson, she undertook to reprint, with introductions, explanatory notes and other appendages, some titles that had originally been published in 1894. Reprinting novels, however good, that had fallen into absolute oblivion would have been risky, but 1894 was a good year for fiction and, bearing in mind the need to select titles that would still speak to present-day readers, a short list of six could be compiled: *The Jungle Book*, *Trilby*, *The Ebb-Tide*, *In the Year of Jubilee*, *The Prisoner of Zenda* and *Esther Waters*. It was with this basic idea of a posthumous competition in mind that these books were reprinted and announced in the London press as the major feature of the Daily Telegraph Cheltenham Festival of Literature to be held in mid-October. Mrs. Laurie, in the preliminary stages, had hoped to include women writers but there was no volume of fiction produced by a female pen in that year that was thought to be up to standard – Mrs. Humphry Ward,

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Rhoda Broughton and Eliza Lynn Linton were not shortlisted. Six judges were chosen and each had to argue for one of the books. Some must have felt happier than others. The one who had to back the Kipling title doubtless was at a disadvantage as *The Jungle Book* is not a novel but a collection of stories and, for that matter, not all of them jungle stories, since with "The White Seal" we are closer to the North Pole than to the Line. *Trilby*, which Gissing called "notorious," is still what it was when it first came out – a period piece overlooked by modern historians of literature. To *The Prisoner of Zenda* only one word remains attached – Ruritania. Anthony Hope never was and cannot hope to become posthumously a major author even though a story like *Quisanté*, a political novel and a *roman à clef*, is still readable. Stevenson might have had a chance with a stronger work than *The Ebb-Tide*, not an impressive work despite its wastrel and two blackguards for adolescent consumption. So there remained *Esther Waters*, Moore's strongest novel, which Gissing read and found badly written (he was right, but Moore revised it several times, and the judges were not given the poorest version to read) and *In the Year of Jubilee*.

A good deal of comment was offered – in print and orally – before the awarding of the prize, and the judges were treated like VIP's by the media. A full-page article appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* (17 September). Its author, Victoria Glendinning, while writing up the forthcoming event, admitted that the whole affair was "something of a marketing ploy," but she remained loyal to publisher and Booker Plc alike. Her article tried to capture the readers' attention with a title that shows the mental evolution of the English reading public since the mid-1890s: "When there was no interest in Hampstead adulteries." She explained how Everyman split into Everyman's Library and Everyman Paperbacks and was not overkind to *In the Year of Jubilee* and its author: "Although George Gissing writes very well about poor aspiring single women, there is an uneasy assumption

of the sexual 'double standard' in *In the Year of Jubilee*." The jackets of the six volumes were reproduced together with portraits of the novelists, the lesser-known photograph taken by Alfred Ellis in 1893 in Gissing's case. Below each portrait a substantial extract from a contemporary review, anonymous except in the case of *Trilby*, which Henry James reviewed in *Harper's Weekly*, was reprinted. Perhaps the choice made for *In the Year of Jubilee* by Victoria Glendinning could have been a better one, for it was that particular review, now known to have been written by James Ashcroft Noble for the *Spectator*, which so incensed Gissing that he wrote a long, often-quoted letter to Morley Roberts about it. Jackie Wullschlager, not a judge, discussed the merits of the six

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books in a rambling piece entitled "Literature turns over an old leaf" (*Financial Times*, 12 September), betrayed her unfamiliarity with Gissing's book, and voted for *Trilby*, which only one member of the panel admitted to liking. In *The Times* (17 September, "Who will win the Booker for 1894?") Ion Trewin wrote a piece very much akin to that of Victoria Glendinning. He introduced the six authors, reproducing portraits of them (the second 1893 photo by Alfred Ellis in Gissing's case), as well as the judges, and offered his own views on the stories. "*In the Year of Jubilee* [was] originally a three-decker novel at a time when the three-decker was in decline. But its theme of a woman's right to freedom and its backdrop of a London celebrating a great event would make a splendid classic BBC television serial in the best traditions of *Middlemarch* or *Jane Eyre*." The *Wakefield Express* followed the preliminary discussion from afar, reporting a statement made by a spokesman for the Gissing Trust that the "recognition of Gissing's quality was much to be welcomed. 'Looking at the list one is struck by how modern Gissing and George Moore appear, compared to the other writers'" ("Gissing's novel nominated," 23 September). A television programme, "The Late Show" (BBC 2), transmitted on 28 September from 11.15 to 12 p.m., was devoted to the forthcoming event. Dr. David Grylls, who watched the programme, kindly sent the following notes: "The presenter was Melvyn Bragg and the studio contributors were Victoria Glendinning, George Steiner and Norman Stone. There were filmed interviews with (among others) Elaine Showalter and Asa Briggs. There was first a filmed report of the 1890s and then a studio discussion of the books listed for the '1894 prize' at the Cheltenham Literary Festival. Gissing was mentioned only three times. Prof. Norman Stone reported Orwell as being 'very impressed' by Gissing and George Moore, and added, 'So am I.' Both Bragg and Steiner opined that Zola was 'one of Gissing's heroes.' And Victoria Glendinning said that in *In the Year of Jubilee* (the Everyman edition of which was shown on the programme) Gissing makes clear that the middle-class people don't care a shoot [sic] for the Queen herself."

Of the proceedings at Cheltenham various accounts have reached us. An undated press-cutting from *The Times* signed Ion Trewin reads:

Moore wins 1894 Booker

Although the judges didn't know it at the time when the vote in the 1894 Booker Prize went finally, but by an extraordinarily close margin, to *Esther Waters* by George Moore, the Cheltenham Festival of Literature audience contained none other than George Moore's

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great-niece. She was the only descendant of a shortlisted author present.

The judges – Gillian Beer, Melvyn Bragg, John Coldstream, Martyn Goff, Victoria

Glendinning and I – eliminated Kipling’s *Jungle Book* and Stevenson’s *The Ebb-Tide* early on. *Trilby*, by George du Maurier, had a passionate enthusiast for its language, if not its plot, in Martyn Goff.

Melvyn Bragg spoke eloquently in support of a novel in which, originally, he had no great expectations: *In the Year of Jubilee*, by George Gissing.

The surprise of the evening was the all-round enthusiasm for Anthony Hope’s romance *The Prisoner of Zenda*. Everyone praised its great pace and stirring storytelling. Could, we asked, such a novel even be shortlisted in 1994? Certainly, in 1894 we had no such inhibitions.

The judges were split, but, in the end, came down in favour of George Moore’s *Esther Waters*, which, despite some minor carelessness in its plotting, was admired for its story, characterisation and backdrop.

Susannah Herbert, in another undated press-cutting, also gave an account of the event in the *Daily Telegraph*:

Esther beats Kipling in belated Booker win

An overdue honour for a Victorian novel without expletives starring a disgraced serving-girl – *Esther Waters* by George Moore – brought the Cheltenham Festival of Literature to a popular conclusion.

The 1894 Booker Prize – a promotional event – was, unlike its 1994 equivalent, characterised by good-humour and openness, with a public debate of the merits of the six shortlisted books.

Although Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book*, Anthony Hope’s *The Prisoner of Zenda*, *Trilby* by George du Maurier, *The Ebb Tide* by Robert Louis Stevenson and *In the Year of Jubilee* by George Gissing each had their defenders, it was Victoria Glendinning’s appeal on behalf of Moore’s neglected masterpiece which swayed her fellow judges and the 500-strong audience.

Mrs. Glendinning said: “*Esther Waters* is a wonderful book: the heroine is not a romantic heroine ... but the novel combines realism and great lyrical beauty.”

This year’s Literary Festival, sponsored by *The Daily Telegraph*, was the most successful on record, with more than 29,000 tickets sold to 181 events.

The account circulated by Dent adds some interesting details:

Scenes of jubilation and amazement last Saturday night at the Cheltenham Festival of Literature where a panel of writers and critics announced the winner of the 1894 Booker Prize.

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Open discussion before an audience saw strong support for George Moore and George Gissing. Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book* melted out of contention as the shortlist narrowed down to a two-horse race which locals in Cheltenham have described as the “Race of the Two Georges.” A third George (du Maurier, author of *Trilby*) fell back early in the running.

When the judging panel retired to continue their deliberations in-camera, there was a

rumoured late surge by *The Prisoner of Zenda* by Anthony Hope. It is further rumoured that the judges, perhaps contentiously, discounted *Zenda* as a contender on the basis that it is too much of a good read.

As the in-camera session drew to a close, the judges united behind Victoria Glendinning who had championed *Esther Waters* throughout the proceedings and the winner was announced. The prize, a complete set of Everyman paperbacks, has been given to Highgate Wood School, London, the choice of the judge who championed the winning book.

In a letter to the present writer Hilary Laurie wrote that “the 1894 prize was good fun, and stimulated a lot of interest. The winner was *Esther Waters* but Gissing ran Moore a close race, particularly in the public debate and in the vote taken from the audience.”

Of the scholarly value of the Gissing title published last autumn, David Grylls gives his opinion in this number. Let us hope it will sell satisfactorily – it has no competitor as a critical edition of the novel. Three Gissing titles are now available in Everyman Paperbacks, and it is expected that a fourth will appear in the next year or two.

Review

George Gissing, *The Odd Women*. London, New York, Ringwood (Australia), Toronto and Auckland: Penguin Books, 1993 [actually 1994]. xxvi + 388 pp. ISBN 0-14-043379-1.

George Gissing, *In the Year of Jubilee*. London, Rutland (USA): Everyman Paperbacks, 1994. xxv + 401 pp. ISBN 0-460-87533-7.

Gissing, as publishers often remark, is not an easy author to keep in print. In recent years, for example, Harvester and Hogarth paperback editions have been published only to disappear. The result is that Gissing’s lesser-known novels stubbornly remain lesser known. But certain titles keep being reprinted – among them *New Grub Street*, now available in World’s Classics as well as

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Penguin, and *The Odd Women*, a favourite on university syllabuses since the rise of feminist studies. In choosing to add *The Odd Women* to their other Gissing title, *New Grub Street*, Penguin are playing fairly safe. Everyman have taken more of a risk in issuing – among a batch of centenary reprints – the relatively unfamiliar (and non-feminist) novel *In the Year of Jubilee*.

Actually the new Penguin Classics *Odd Women* is not new at all but merely a reprint of the American Meridian edition of 1983. It offers no explanatory notes and its bibliography is out of date, containing nothing published since 1982. What redeems it is Elaine Showalter’s introduction which, as we might expect from her, is cogent and illuminating. Discerning that the book’s structure depends on “the characteristic Victorian narrative technique of parallel and eventually connected plots,” Showalter shows how the novel embodies Gissing’s own ambivalence about the New Woman while also making a complex contribution to a widespread contemporary debate. In the treatment of the Widdowsons’ marriage, she writes, Gissing “rises above the confusions of his personal life to the evenhandedness of the artist.” Similarly evenhanded, Showalter recognises that Widdowson, as well as Monica, is trapped in a stereotyped gender role and at times strikes the reader as pitiful. She is equally perceptive on the “romantic power struggle” between Everard

Barfoot and Rhoda Nunn, arguing that though the book is skeptical about the prospects for male-female relationships, there's an "optimistic force" in its concluding picture of Rhoda's reformist energy.

Showalter succeeds in relating *The Odd Women* to other late Victorian New Woman novels, such as William Barry's *The New Antigone* or Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, but in emphasising the book's feminist credentials she sometimes writes as if Rhoda Nunn is more politically consistent than the text suggests. She says, for example, that "After she has agreed to marry Barfoot, Rhoda continues to think of herself primarily as a feminist exemplar," and she quotes Rhoda's hope that "she might illustrate woman's power of equality in marriage." But "agreed to marry Barfoot" is highly misleading, for – as is made perfectly clear at the end of chapter 25 and the beginning of chapter 26 – it is rather that Rhoda forces Everard to yield by insisting on marriage rather than free union; and what she hopes she might illustrate is woman's *claim* of equality in marriage (rather than woman's "power").

A number of minor factual errors disfigure this otherwise useful introduction: Eduoard Bertz

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for Eduard Bertz, Rosamund Vincy for Rosamond Vincy, nineteen for eighteen as Gissing's age when he was sent to prison. It is a pity that the publishers did not take the opportunity of correcting these, nor of drawing on advances in scholarship made available since 1982 (we now know, for example, more precisely which works Gissing consulted before writing *The Odd Women*). Given the considerable current interest in this novel, an accurate, fully annotated edition would surely be widely welcomed. Still, it is good to see another Gissing title available in paperback.

The same is true of the Everyman *In the Year of Jubilee*, though this offers more for the same amount of money. A biographical note on Gissing and a chronology of his life and times are reprinted, substantially unaltered, from other Everyman volumes. This edition also contains an introduction (by Paul Delany), notes on the text (by Jon Paul Henry), a section "Gissing and his Critics," suggestions for further reading, and – a new development – a "Text Summary," no doubt valuable for students unable to follow the plot.

Paul Delany's introduction, though much briefer and less detailed than Elaine Showalter's, locates the book clearly in its historical context, while also pointing out its prescience:

A century before our time, Gissing already had a stark and prophetic vision of the forces that would create twentieth-century Britain: advertising, prosperity, the rise of mass culture and suburbs, the shift from religion to materialism, the sexual and economic emancipation of women.

As Delany says, Gissing's treatment of these forces is largely skeptical or hostile. However, like Showalter, he also recognises the author's ambivalence towards his subject. One of the problems about *In the Year of Jubilee* is the relationship between Lionel Tarrant and Nancy Lord. As Delany puts it, "Gissing makes Nancy much more attractive than Lionel, but will not allow her to break the limits that Lionel sets to her existence." Gissing always objected on principle to having his opinions inferred from his characters', and he specifically repudiated the notion that Tarrant was merely his mouthpiece. Nevertheless, there are no clear indications that Nancy's eventual submission to Tarrant is meant to be read ironically.

The explanatory notes to this edition are excellent, often historically illuminating (the "teetotal drink" from which Luckworth Crewe has narrowly missed making his fortune is linked with the invention of Coca-Cola just one year before Victoria's jubilee) and sometimes critically suggestive

(Tarrant's brief quotation from Tennyson's "Locksley Hall" is highly revealing of his state of mind

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once the original passage is given). The section "Gissing and his Critics" is arguably less useful. Although it was virtually inevitable to have the *Spectator* review of the novel, together with Gissing's well-known riposte, the familiar extracts from Henry James, George Orwell and Raymond Williams are general accounts of Gissing's work rather than discussions of *In the Year of Jubilee*. The suggestions for further reading, on the other hand, are helpful, even though – as readers of this review will know – the *Gissing Newsletter* is now the *Gissing Journal*.

David Grylls, Kellogg College, Oxford.

Notes and News

Ros Stinton's Gissing Catalogue No. 2, illustrated with black and white drawings from the first edition of *By the Ionian Sea*, contains 299 items (1-132 works by Gissing; 133-206 letters, short stories, etc; 207-259 books, etc about Gissing; 260-299 books of related interest). The works range from English first editions to the latest paperbacks. Some three-deckers are available, usually rebound in quarter leather, as well as early editions issued by Smith, Elder and Lawrence & Bullen. There are a few bibliographical oddities such as an undated Library Press edition of *The Town Traveller* or the sixpenny reprint of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* published by Constable in 1908. Well worth acquiring are several short stories in the original magazines, for instance "His Brother's Keeper" in *Chapman's Magazine of Fiction* (1895) or "In Honour Bound" and "The Tyrant's Apology" in the same volume (XIII, 1895) of the *English Illustrated Magazine*. But neither *Workers in the Dawn* nor *Human Odds and Ends* are listed. A new edition of the latter title is needed, as well as a one-volume, reset edition of *Isabel Clarendon*, that unfairly neglected novel. Among the books of related interest are two by Algernon Gissing, *A Secret of the North Sea*, and *The Footpath Way in Gloucestershire*, his last and only volume published after the Great War, Alfred Gissing's biography of William Holman Hunt and T. W. Gissing's very scarce book on the Wakefield ferns. Ros Stinton's address will be found on the inside back cover of this journal.

Another catalogue of Gissing interest was received recently, Catalogue Fifty-Five, Literary First Editions, from Sumner & Stillman (P.O. Box 973, Yarmouth, ME 04096). The Gissing items

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are as follows: no. 66, *The Ferns and Fern Allies of Wakefield*; no. 67, a first edition of *Demos* in 3 volumes; no. 68, *A Life's Morning*, the twelve instalments (January-December 1888) extracted from the *Cornhill* and bound in modern orange cloth; no. 69, the Dodd, Mead archive regarding the copyright and publication of *Charles Dickens, a Critical Study*; no. 70, *Short Stories of To-Day and Yesterday*; no. 71, *George Gissing's Commonplace Book*, ed. Jacob Korg; and no. 72, the Sumner & Stillman catalogue of books by and about Gissing issued in 1994.

Shigeru Koike's translation of *By the Ionian Sea* was enough of a success in the well-known Iwanami Library for its editor to decide to add to it another Gissing title – a selection of short stories to be translated by Professor Koike, and scheduled for publication in late 1995.

Mr. Masahiko Yahata reports that he gave a lecture on Gissing entitled “Enchanted by an English novelist” on 1 November. It was one of the 1994 Beppu University Junior College Open Lectures. He discussed *New Grub Street*, *The Odd Women*, “Humplebee” and “The Poet’s Portmanteau” and showed how strongly Gissing’s works can appeal to modern Japanese readers. The lecture was attended by an audience of about 250.

Among Jacob Korg’s recent Gissing activities was a talk to the Book Discussion Group of the Women’s University Club in Seattle on 20 September. He discussed *The Odd Women*, giving the biographical background and information on the condition of women in the period – and the discussants themselves had observations to make about the book. *New Grub Street* was recommended as continued reading.

Audio Book Contractors, Inc. still offer *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* in their 1995 catalogue of classic books on cassette. Purchase: \$26.95; 30-day rental: \$9.00. Why not add *By the Ionian Sea* to the collection in 1995?

A fine example of modernist misreadings of Gissing has been sent by a correspondent. In the first number of *Blast*, Wyndham Lewis’s avant-garde short-lived publication published by John Lane on 20 June 1914, which opens with aphorisms, the following statement occurs: “Wilde gushed twenty years ago about the beauty of machinery. Gissing, in his romantic delight with modern lodging houses, was futurist in this sense.”

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The Table of the Paladins



“The temple surrounded by a disfiguring wall, ten feet high. No use, for my guide, who had no key to the double iron gate, simply lifted one side off its hinges. Temple very grand. Two parallel rows of columns, one 10, the other 5, and bits of substructure.” Thus wrote Gissing in his diary after his visit to Metaponto, a city known to us on account of its connection with Pythagoras, who died there in 497 B.C., and of the ruins of its Greek temple, the Tavola dei Paladini (so called because, according to Baedeker’s *Guide to Southern Italy and Sicily*, 1912, the peasants believed “each pillar to have been the seat of a Saracen chieftain”). The present photograph, taken in the summer of 1965, will be worth comparing with the drawing of the same ruins, within the objectionable walls, reproduced in the first English edition of *By the Ionian Sea*. Gissing alludes to the ruins in his letter to his son Walter of 26 November 1897, one of the last in Volume 6 of the *Collected Letters*, July 1895-November 1897 (Ohio University Press), now available in England as well as in America. The rest of the third Italian journey, from December 1897 to April 1898, will be echoed in the letters to be published in Volume 7, December 1897-December 1899, which is to appear at the end of the present year.

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Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem (London: Sinclair-Stevenson), Peter Ackroyd’s latest novel, is a story that anybody interested in Gissing should know about and perhaps read because Gissing is a major character in it. Profusely advertised by the media, the book was published last September and easy to procure for £14.99 in any bookshop selling new fiction. The Charing Cross shop in which the editor, happening to be in London in mid-September, invested some of his cash, had an impressive stock of *Dan Lenos*. Great was his surprise on discovering that he had purchased a signed copy, but he promptly realized that the dozens, if not hundreds, of *Dan Lenos* on the premises were all signed, an index to the author’s semi-cultural industry. If Peter Ackroyd does not

have copies of *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* and *Workers in the Dawn* on his shelves, his favourite library doubtless has. He is familiar with Gissing's early life and with some characteristics of his early fiction. He also knows of Nell, but of course in this crime novel, the action of which is set in 1880, though the Golem murders are based on those of Jack the Ripper which actually occurred eight years later, many of the events are fictional. Nell's brief intimacy with a member of the police, for instance, is possibly in character, but only Ackroyd's jubilant pen is responsible for the incident. Karl Marx is another historical character introduced into the narrative, and he narrowly escapes murder. Like Gissing, he is depicted at work in the Reading-Room of the British Museum. Once we have seen them, we are not surprised to come across Richard Garnett, the Superintendent of the Reading-Room, who is lent an interest in astrology which fits in with the foggy, melodramatic atmosphere of the tale. Clearly, the author has turned to sensational account his familiarity with Dickens, evinced a few years ago in a biography which was much discussed partly for reasons which have little enough to do with its contents.

Here are some extracts from reviews. Isabel Colegate (*Daily Telegraph*, 17 September) calls *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* "a shocker – a crafty, cunning, creepy shocker in the Victorian mode." She views Lizzie Cree, the wife of John Cree whom another reviewer styles "an epicure in evisceration," as a new version of Somerset Maugham's *Liza of Lambeth*, but "a good deal less pathetic." In this Victorian world with the music-hall at its height, "there is the anti-semitism which ascribes the murders to the activities of a mythical Jewish homunculus, a golem. There is the anxiety of George Gissing about Babbage's Analytical Engine, the forerunner of the computer, which is housed, according to the terms of its inventor's will, in a building along the Commercial

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Road 'until the public mind is fully prepared for it,' and which Gissing understandably suspects may represent a terrible threat to the spirit of man. There is Marx's view that murder is a bourgeois preoccupation. And there is the suggestion that it may in fact be the ultimate act of an overblown Romanticism. Outside the Reading Room, the melodrama in which the leading part is played by Lizzie Cree, music-hall turn and murderess, touches the lives of Gissing and Marx and even Lizzie's hero Dan Leno, the funniest Man in the World."

James Saynor entitled his review in the *Observer* (9 September) "Crimes from the Library." He quotes Ackroyd who observes that "the leap from bibliophile to maniac may be a short one" and passes this generous judgment on the artistic interest of the novel: "As with many thorough pieces of research, the text is continually interrogating itself, John Fowles-style. 'It would not be going too far to suggest,' it muses, 'that there was some link between the murder of prostitutes in Limehouse and the ritual humiliation of women in pantomime.' [...] Knowledge fuels psychosis, but in Ackroyd's hands it also fuels a flawlessly good read."

In the *Times Literary Supplement* for 9 September, Peter Keating was less enthusiastic. He views the story as an unsatisfactory medley of fact and fiction, the whole elaborate structure being "held in place, in theory at least, by a Dickensian philosophy of a sort of all-embracing interconnectedness." Dan Leno is no more the real Dan Leno than George Gissing is the real George Gissing. The various narrative threads that the reader is invited to follow, though playfully inter-twined, operate "like a confused and confusing double standard. Be very careful here! Don't bother there! *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* is certainly a novel to be enjoyed, but it is not one to be trusted." In the *Times* for 17 September Giles Coren reviewed the critics on the book. He mentioned other reviews which we have not seen, those by Michael Dibdin in the *Independent on Sunday*, Lucasta in the *Independent*, and Joan Smith in the *Financial Times*. Can the story be called "a four-square copper-bottomed crime novel?" Are we "dazzled" by it? Is the effect produced "a

pyrotechnic display”? In the near future, it is likely to cause a good deal of confusion in the minds of those hasty reviewers who will not trouble to check whether Gissing married Nell Harrison in early 1880 or late 1879 or whether he lived at the time in Hanway Street or Hanover Street. Contrary to what Isabel Colegate says, one would hardly encourage Peter Ackroyd to write a biography of Gissing. There would be too great a risk of having a book as unreliable as *The Private*

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Life of Henry Maitland or a subsequent biography in which the circumstances of Gissing's second marriage were confused with those of a minor character in *Born in Exile*.

Whatever reputation *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* may earn for itself and retain in the next few years, the book will remain one of the dozens of novels in which Gissing's life or works are mentioned or discussed in a significant context. But who will ever dare view it as anything more than clever second-rate fiction?

Recent Publications

Volumes

Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas (eds.), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Six, 1895-1897*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1995. Off-white paper-covered boards with a grey tape binding and, on the spine, gilt titling on dark green panel. Dark green dust-jacket with pattern in light green. xlii + 405 pages. \$60.00. ISBN 0-8214-1098-9.

George Gissing, *In the Year of Jubilee*, edited by Paul Delany, with notes by Jon Paul Henry, London: J. M. Dent (Everyman Paperbacks); Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co. Inc., 1994. Pictorial paperback. xxv + 401 pages. £6.99 and \$7.95. ISBN 0-460-87533-7.

George Gissing, *New Grub Street*, edited with an introduction by Bernard Bergonzi, London: Penguin Books, [1994]. Pictorial paper-back. 556 pages. £6.99. ISBN 0-14-043032-6. This is the seventh impression in the Penguin Classics.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Roger Henkle, "Morrison, Gissing, and the Stark Reality," *Novel*, Spring 1992, pp. 302-20. On Arthur Morrison's and Clarence Rook's lower-class fiction, Maugham's *Liza of Lambeth* and *The Nether World*.

Diane M. Smith, "Narrative Subversion in the Naturalist Novel: Three Novels of the 1880s," *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 29, no. 2, 1992, pp. 157-71. The three novels are Zola's

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Germinal, Max Kretzer's *Die beiden Genossen* (The Two Comrades) and *Demos*.

Anon., "Recent Books," *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, September 1993, p. 278. Notice of the Ryburn edition of *New Grub Street*.

Nicholas Lezard, "Autumn Books: Paperbacks," *Guardian*, 26 October 1993, Section 2, p. 20. Notice of the World's Classics edition of *New Grub Street*.

George Lilley, *Anthony Powell: A Bibliography*, Winchester: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1993. Lists Powell's publications of Gissing interest.

Francesco Badolato, "Catanzaro in G. Gissing, F. Lenormant e N. Douglas," *Calabria Sconosciuta*, April-June 1994, pp. 37-39. With illustrations.

Anon., "Recent Books," *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, June 1994, p. 139. Notice of the World's Classics edition of *New Grub Street*.

Francesco Badolato, "Reggio in Gissing, Lenormant e Douglas," *Calabria Sconosciuta*, July-September 1994, pp. 65-68. With illustrations.

Peter Keating, "Here we are again!", *Times Literary Supplement*, 9 September 1994, p. 21. Review of *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, by Peter Ackroyd. See "Notes and News."

Jackie Wullschlager, "Literature turns over an old leaf," *Financial Times*, 12 September 1994. On the 1894 and 1994 Booker Prizes, with allusions to *In the Year of Jubilee*.

Victoria Glendinning, "Who would have been in the running for the 1894 Booker?", *Daily Telegraph* (Arts and Books), 17 September 1994, p. 6. With a photograph of Gissing in 1893. Also on p. 7, "Another Lizzie takes to the axe," a review by Isabel Colegate of *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*.

Ion Trewin, "Who will win the Booker for 1894?", *The Times* (Week-end Section), 17 September 1994, p. 16. With another – different – photograph of Gissing in 1893.

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Anon., "Gissing's novel nominated," *Wakefield Express*, 23 September 1994, p. 3.

Anon., "Novel on Shortlist," *Wakefield Express-Midweek Extra*, 29 September 1994, p. 9.

Martha S. Vogeler, "Symposium," *George Eliot-George Henry Lewes Studies*, September 1994, pp. 64-65. On the B.B.C. serialization of *Middlemarch*, with allusions to Gissing and Clara Collet.

Francesco Badolato, "Gissing: dall' Italia un desiderio di mediterraneizzarsi," *Il Corriere di Roma*, 15 October 1994, pp. 15-16. Review of Vol. 4 of the *Collected Letters*.

Anon., "Books Received," *Victorian Newsletter*, Fall 1994, p. 34. Notice of Vol. 4 of the *Collected Letters*.

Anon., "Gissing and Wells," *H. G. Wells Newsletter*, Autumn 1994, p. 3. A paragraph on Gissing and Wells in the forthcoming volumes of the *Collected Letters*.

Daïsaburo Okumoto, "Reading for the Hundredth Time," *Asteion*, Autumn 1994, pp. 238-46. Professor Koike's recent translation of *By the Ionian* was selected as the book of the season by Professor Okumoto in his series of essays entitled "Reading for the Hundredth Time." The piece begins with an interview of Professor Koike (pp. 238-42), and is followed by Professor Okumoto's essay, "A Vision of a *déraciné*." *Asteion* is a quarterly magazine published by the TBS Britannica Japan Ltd (28-2 Samban-cho, Chiyodaku, Tokyo, 102 Japan).

Stephen Coleman, "William Morris and 'Education Towards Revolution': 'Making Socialists' versus 'Putting Them in Their Place,'" *Journal of the William Morris Society*, Autumn 1994, pp. 49-58. An essay more remarkable for its idealization of Morris than the knowledge of Gissing it shows. *Demos* and *Thyrza* are discussed at some length on pp. 51-52.

Jeanette Shumaker, "Breaking with the Conventions: Victorian Confession Novels and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*," *English Literature in Transition*, Vol. 37, no. 4, 1994, pp. 445-62. The author

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frequently refers to *The Unclassed*.

Irving Howe, *A Critic's Notebook*, edited and introduced by Nicholas Howe. New York, San Diego, London: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1994. Contains many passages on Gissing. The book was reviewed by Robert Taylor in the (Boston) *Globe*, on 21 September 1994 ("Howe's illuminating, exhilarating 'Notebook'"), with mention of Howe's interest in Gissing.

Nikki Lee Manos and Meri-Jane Rochelson, *Transforming Genres: New Approaches to British Fiction of the 1890s*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994. Contains "New *Grub Street* and the Woman Writer of the 1890s," pp. 21-45, by Margaret Diane Stetz.

David McKie, "Thatcher's spirit glimpsed through the fogs of history," *Guardian*, 2 January 1995, p. 16. This is an article on *New Grub Street*. McKie's conclusion reads: "What [Gissing] needs, I suppose, is a TV serialisation. The trouble is that to quicken the public's appetite, the adaptation would need the touch not of an Edwin Reardon but of a Jasper Milvain." This article also appeared in the *Guardian International* on the same day, p. 2.

Subscriptions

The Gissing Journal is published four times a year, in January, April, July and October. Subscriptions are normally on a two-year basis and begin with the January number.

Rates per annum are as follows:

Private subscribers: £10.00

Libraries: £15.00

Single copies can be supplied as well as sets for back years.

Payment should be made in sterling to *The Gissing Journal*, by cheque or international money order sent to:

The Gissing Journal
7 Town Lane, Idle, Bradford BD10 8PR, England.

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The Gissing Journal publishes essays and notes on Gissing and his circle. Contributions may deal with biographical, critical, bibliographical and topographical subjects. They should be addressed to the editor, Pierre Coustillas, 10 rue Gay-Lussac, 59110 La Madeleine, France.

This journal is indexed in the *MLA Annual Bibliography*, in the Summer number of *Victorian Studies* and *The Year's Work in English Studies*.

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